

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

DEVELOPING AND STRUCTURING A PERMANENT CONTRACTING
COMMAND IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS TO MAXIMIZE THE
TRAINING, EDUCATION AND POTENTIAL OF MILITARY CONTRACTING
OFFICERS IN ORDER TO BE BETTER PREPARED TO SUPPORT THE
OPERATIONAL FORCES AND LEAD THE MARINE CORPS THROUGH THE
21ST CENTURY

by

Eric M. Corcoran

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Thesis Advisor:

Associate Advisor:

L. E. Edwards

E. Cory Yoder

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OPERATIONAL FORCES AND LEAD THE MARINE CORPS THROUGH THE
21ST CENTURY**

Eric M. Corcoran
Captain, United States Marine Corps
B.S., New Hampshire College, 1993

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December 2000

Author:

Eric M. Corcoran

Approved by:

L. E. Edwards, Thesis Advisor

E. C. Y. d

E. Cory Yoder, Associate Advisor

R. T. H. for

Reuben T. Harris, Chairman
Department of Systems Management

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The Marine Corps contracting community continually refines its policies and procedures as a response to the changing environment it operates in. The objective of this thesis was to develop a permanent contracting command structure in order to maximize the training, education and potential of the military contracting officers. To accomplish this objective, this thesis identified the historical and statutory basis for government contracting, where billets for qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers exist and where they are currently non-existent yet in demand, and the roles and responsibilities of the Marine Corps military contracting officers. Based upon this archival research and interviews with members of the contracting community, this thesis developed a framework for a new permanent contracting command structure through the use of an integrated systems model. This model assists in creating more military contracting officer billets, standardizes the reporting and operational chains of command, promotes stability, growth and development, aids in boosting retention, and creates a path for career progression. This study is a proactive approach to the changing environment of contracting that will better prepare the contracting community to support the operational forces and lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

The Marine Corps faces new challenges in executing its mission through the 21st century. Today's enemy is smaller, smarter and more technologically advanced. More and more we see the United States Marine Corps (USMC) performing humanitarian operations, non-combatant evacuations, operations other than war and low intensity conflicts, as well as the daily garrison duties with a downsized force. As each contingency arises, the need for swift and effective support operations becomes a vital element to ensure success.

A key component to the support operations is contracting. From the serene base operations support contracting to the bullet riddled battlefields of Bosnia in contingency contracting, the war fighters have needs that cannot be met through the traditional Marine Corps supply system. This is where Marine Corps contracting takes over. Today there are only twenty billets available and filled by qualified military contracting officers. These billets are geographically dispersed throughout the world and each operates differently; from what they do to whom they report to. Generally speaking, these officers' origins and training are the same, but upon leaving their schooling and returning to the operational forces to support the war fighters, each embarks on a substantially different path.

Marine officers spend time in the operational forces in their primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and then, if selected, attend the Naval Postgraduate

School for training and education in Acquisitions and Contract Management. Immediately following graduation, the officers are then sent out to one of the twenty billets mentioned earlier to do a payback tour as a contracting officer for three years. When that tour expires, each officer then returns to their primary MOS field in the operational forces. After leaving the contracting payback tour, there is virtually no more association and active participation in the contracting operations of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps spends tens of thousands of dollars on each officer who attends the Naval Postgraduate School. One study suggests that the cost per student attending the Naval Postgraduate School exceeds \$109,000 [Ref. 1:p. 14]. The officer spends eighteen months going through a grueling academic curriculum in obtaining his Master's degree and becoming a qualified contracting officer. This commitment by both the Marine Corps and the officer should have more of a longstanding impact on the service. In the Army, for example, once you make the transition to the contracting field, you remain in there for the duration of your time in the service. This study will look at that possibility for the Marine Corps and try to develop through the use of an organizational systems model a similar permanent command structure. The objective will be to show where additional billets could be created in the Marine Corps and at other joint commands for qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers. The net gain will be a better contracting force that is trained, equipped and ready to support the Marine Corps as it leads the way through the 21st century.

B. OBJECTIVE

The primary purpose of this research is to review the current policies and organizational structure of the United States Marine Corps military contracting officer force; then to analyze the current design's strengths and weaknesses and develop a model for a new permanent contracting command structure that will be better prepared to meet today's operational needs and support the forces through the 21st century. Following the analysis of the data from interviews and a literature review, the researcher intends to use a systems model to develop a proposed new command structure for the United States Marine Corps' organizational design that will aid military contracting officers in more effectively carrying out their assigned missions.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following primary research question will be used to direct and guide the objectives of this study:

How can the United States Marine Corps re-structure its military officer contracting force to be better prepared to meet today's needs and be more effective in supporting the operational forces?

In order to find a complete answer to this primary research question, some other areas must be reviewed and fully understood. To do so, the following secondary questions will be used in this study:

1. Where do the current billets exist for Marine Corps military contracting officers and where are billets currently non-existent that if created would benefit the Marine Corps in supporting its operational needs?
2. What are the current roles and responsibilities of the Marine Corps military contracting officers at each command?
3. How does the USMC support the Defense Contracting Management Agency (DCMA) with qualified military contracting officers and can additional billets be provided that would benefit both DCMA and the Marine Corps?
4. What lessons can the USMC learn from the US Army in their effective and efficient training and employment of their military contracting officer personnel?
5. What organizational design changes can be made in the USMC to continuously provide for well trained contracting officers that are mission effective and what is the resulting career field path?

D. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The scope of this thesis will include a review of the policies on the training, educating and assigning of military officers in the USMC contracting field. This will help to understand the “how, when, where and why’s” regarding the nature of the Marine Corps military contracting officer force. A review of the design and structure of the billets for Marine Corps military contracting officers will show where the current military contracting officer billets are available and the purpose they serve. Next, an in-depth analysis of the current command structure of the Marine Corps military contracting

officer billets and the roles and responsibilities of the officers assigned to them will be investigated. This will show the current structure's strengths and weaknesses to help lead to recommended solutions to improve efficiency and effectiveness throughout. Lastly, the thesis will develop a systems model that integrates the Marine Corps contracting campaign and that will aid in determining how to re-structure the military officer contracting force in order to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

This research will be based upon the experiences of past, current and future military officers in the contracting field that have supported normal day-to-day operational needs as well as contingency operations. The methodology used in this thesis research will be multifaceted. To begin with, the researcher will conduct a literature review of books, magazine articles, studies, journals, policies, Marine Corps Orders and Directives, Marine Corps doctrines and other information resources that deal with the subject of Marine Corps contracting. From there the researcher will conduct interviews with past, current and future Marine Corps contracting officers to gain a sense of their roles and responsibilities in performing their day-to-day missions and contingency operations. This will help the reader to gain a sense of exactly what a USMC military contracting officer does in the performance of his duties. Next, interviews will be conducted with Marine Corps Legal officers to gain a sense of their unique command and support structure. The investigation then turns to conducting interviews with officers assigned to the Army Acquisition Corps to gain a sense of their roles and responsibilities and determine if the Marine Corps could benefit from a similar command concept. The latter two actions are the driving elements to aid in designing a

systems design change that will mirror the concept of the Army Acquisition Corps yet possess the physical structure of a Marine Corps legal command. To push the investigation further, the researcher will conduct interviews with officers assigned to the Defense Contract Management Agency to gain a sense of their roles and responsibilities and determine if Marine Corps military contracting officers would benefit by being assigned to that command. This would be a step in working towards more “joint” military operations on a daily basis and not just in hostile/war time situations.

The Marine Corps spends a lot of time and money on training, educating and employing its military contracting officers. In doing so, the individual Marine officer spends a considerable amount of time outside of his primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). When he returns to that primary MOS field after his single payback tour in contracting, he is not attuned to current practices in his MOS field. After catching back up with that MOS field and being away from the contracting spectrum, the officer then loses his edge in the contracting field and generally never assumes another contracting assignment in the Marine Corps. These are significant tradeoffs in both situations. By integrating a systems design model with this study, a new organizational structure for a permanent Marine Corps contracting command can be developed. This would have the officer make the transition to the contracting field and serve in that MOS/field for the remainder of his time in the Marine Corps. The development of a systems model that integrates the USMC contracting campaign and that will aid in determining how to re-structure the contracting force in order to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century is the goal. As the investigation looks for trends

or key elements that will show that the Marine Corps and the individual contracting officer will benefit from a system design change, the results of this study could then be proposed to key senior officers in leadership roles of the Marine Corps to evaluate and execute as deemed appropriate.

A few key assumptions were made in conducting this study. They deal primarily with the civilian and enlisted Marines of the Marine Corps contracting field. While both are of the utmost importance and essential elements of the Marine Corps contracting world, neither is being reviewed or analyzed in this study. The assumption in this study is that when the military contracting officer force is discussed that it also includes any required enlisted Marines and/or civil service employees normally supporting these officers in their commands. This would mean that any changes proposed would be accompanied by the appropriate complement of civilian and enlisted Marines normally present to support and assist the Marine Corps military contracting officers in carrying out their assigned missions. A specific change or modification to the civilian and/or enlisted Marine structure would be a complete study on its own.

The second and final assumption is that the Marine Corps is willing to acknowledge its strengths and weaknesses and not be adverse to changing its structure to increase its effectiveness. As Marines in the occupational fields of supply, administration, fiscal, legal and food service are considered to be war fighters, so should the business leaders of the Marine Corps. This assumption acknowledges the USMC military contracting officers as such.

E. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This research effort is comprised of six chapters covering the following subject areas:

Chapter I is an introduction providing the rationale and objectives to be obtained in this study.

Chapter II provides background information on the military contracting community within the Marine Corps. It also reviews the structure of this community as well as the Marine Corps legal commands, the Army Acquisition Corps, and the Defense Contract Management Agency.

Chapter III will present the data collected by the researcher from key personnel in the above mentioned areas. It provides a realistic view of the duties actually being performed in the billets currently available and filled by qualified military contracting officers.

Chapter IV will be an in-depth analysis of the data collected in Chapters II and III. It will cover the strengths, weaknesses, similarities, deficiencies, key elements and trends.

Chapter V will take the material presented in Chapters II, III and IV and suggest a new command structure of a permanent contracting command through the use of an integrated systems model.

Chapter VI will summarize the research effort and findings while providing conclusions and recommendations.

II. BACKGROUND DATA

Congressional control over the procurement system through laws, regulations and statutes has been in effect since the Revolutionary War. For over 150 years now, Congress has assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the procurement system and continues to find it cumbersome, inefficient and laden with deficiencies. [Ref. 2:p. 16] This chapter reviews historical and statutory information and then transitions to Marine Corps specific policies and procedures that govern the contracting community.

A. COMMISSIONS AND CHANGE

A considerable number of employees work in Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition organizations that execute millions of contract actions every year. The idea of change is not new to the Department of Defense Acquisition and Contracting world. There have been major commissions, numerous reports and acquisition improvement acts created to review the Department of Defense's acquisition process. One fact does stand out, that is, the importance of centralized policymaking and decentralized program execution.

Since 1971, two key policy documents (known as the 5000 series documents) have been revised and reissued ten times with the eleventh revision possibly due out this year. When these documents were originally issued, they totaled seven pages. Through time, the documents have grown to over 900 pages in length. This serves as possible evidence that the Department of Defense is somewhat unclear about how it wants to

proceed. The evolution does reveal that the Department of Defense seems to be sensitive to changes in its environment and that it is willing to adapt its own procedures to respond as necessary. [Ref. 3:pp. 109-127]

1. First Hoover Commission

“Purchasing requires a high degree of professional competence, yet many purchasing offices are not manned with competent personnel” [Ref 4:p. 89]. The first Hoover Commission stated this as a major deficiency of federal supply operations. This commission was brought into being by the Lodge-Brown Act and created by a unanimous vote of the Congress in July of 1937. The Commission was tasked with organizing the Executive Branch to operate more effectively and efficiently. The Commission promoted the assumption that the Executive branch had never been effectively organized by continuously avoiding the term “reorganization”. It sought to reduce duplication of efforts and overlapping of functions. The result was a blueprint for good government.

To attack this mighty task, the Hoover Commission defined twenty-four principal problems of Government and management. It then created special research committees, known as “task forces” made up of specialists in key fields. It began to create a model of a streamlined government. One of the areas it dissected was federal supply operations, known today as “purchasing and contracting.” The Commission concluded that supply, as it was called in that era, was not fully recognized as an important executive function.

This failure was reflected in an inadequate supply organization for the government as a whole as well as for the various departments and agencies. Lastly it stated that:

This failure is reflected further in the personnel system which does not provide competent staff to fill supply positions. Although purchasing is a highly skilled profession that requires intimate knowledge of trade conditions and markets, Government agencies are inadequate to recruit and keep persons with the required professional competence, personnel processes fail to make proper acknowledgement of the skills required. [Ref. 4:p. 96]

This was one of the earliest emphasis on improving the professionalism, effectiveness and stability of the contracting workforce.

2. Second Hoover Commission

In 1955, the second Hoover Commission dedicated an entire task force to review military procurement. In doing so, the task force was able to delve into greater detail pertaining to the subject then previously had been done. A wealth of talent and ability in the military departments was being partially utilized in the procurement world because of the following four reasons:

1. Requiring those who achieve top military rank to become well rounded in all military fields, with predominant emphasis going to combat command skills;
2. Rotating key logistics personnel from assignments prior to the arrival and indoctrination of qualified replacements;
3. Assigning senior officers with limited logistics training to key logistics positions; and
4. Depriving civilians of access to many key positions of predominantly business management character, on the grounds that such positions must be reserved for the training of military executives or that background in military operations is a prerequisite. [Ref. 5:p. 68]

The Task Force also stated to the Commission, which reported out to the President of the United States, that it was not uncommon to find key

personnel/Commanding Officers/Officers-In-Charge at many of the largest logistical organizations to be inexperienced in the functions they were charged with managing.

To remedy this, it was thought that a policy should be implemented that included the following steps:

1. Departmental school programs should be designed to assure the phased training of all career procurement employees not adequately qualified;
2. The positions of material manager, Commanding Officer of a logistical unit, and all technical or supervisory positions at any non-tactical units should be filled only with qualified career-trained personnel. Where it was necessary to place combat officers in logistical activities as staff assistants or advisors, each officer should be required to qualify through proper training and experience; and
3. Qualified civilians should be given the logistical training made available to military personnel, and an opportunity to advance in those positions except where the requirement for military personnel is essential. [Ref. 5:p. 69]

The main thrusts from this commission concerning military procurement activities came in the form of two clear, bold and matter-of-fact recommendations that stated:

1. The Assistant Secretary of Defense should establish Department of Defense policies to strengthen the role of contracting officers in the interest of more expeditious and effective buying; and
2. The Secretary of Defense should establish a policy requiring each military department to develop and assign career-trained personnel to technical and executive posts throughout the field of procurement management. [Ref. 5:p. 67]

3. The Fitzhugh Commission

More than 20 years after the first Hoover Commission reported its findings, the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel was appointed by President Nixon in July 1969. The Chairman of the Board for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Gilbert W. Fitzhugh, was called upon to be the Chair of this newly appointed Defense Panel. The other members of the panel included prominent members of the business and education communities, while omitting any elected Government officials. The Blue Ribbon Defense Panel would later be known as the Fitzhugh Commission. As the Commission was directed to study the business organization and management of the Department of Defense, it was specifically tasked with reviewing “the Defense procurement policies and practices, particularly as they related to costs, time and quality”. [Ref. 6:p. V]

After reviewing prior reports of studies on the Department of Defense, interviewing hundreds of employees within the Department of Defense, surveying organizations within the Department of Defense, and consulting with reputable individuals outside of the Department of Defense, the results virtually mirrored those that the Hoover Commission uncovered two decades earlier: the system was broken and needed to be corrected in order to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. The commission specifically stated that:

The promotion and rotation systems of the military services do not facilitate career development in the technical and professional activities such as research and development, procurement, intelligence, communications and automatic data processing. [Ref. 6:p. 2]

The report also contained specific observations of the Program Management field of which contracting is an integral part, in stating that:

Program Management assignments have not generally been recognized as having good potential for career development for military officers. Program Management is not effectively a career service for military officers, although military officers act as Program Managers on a majority of developments, and are almost always designated as Program Managers for major systems. These officers have traditionally been rotated on normal tours of duty (2-4 years) among a variety of types of jobs. Although they usually bring to the Program Manager assignment knowledge of the operational use of the type of system involved in the development, they often have a minimum of training and experience in business management; yet they are faced with the task of negotiating with and monitoring the efforts of industrial organizations which bring to the problem talented, technical and management personnel with extensive continuity and experience in the particular type of activity encompassed in the development. In addition, Program Managers have been often rotated, based on time in their careers, at critical points in the development of the programs and frequently with no overlap for training their successor. [Ref. 6:p. 79]

In voicing this need for better business practices, increased organizational stability and beneficial training and experience in the procurement field, the Commission reported to the President that the Department of Defense should establish a procurement career specialty code, a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), in each branch of the Service. Additionally, it specified that this new field should select, train and educate a sufficient number of qualified officers to carry out these business type missions for the good of the services and the Department of Defense as a whole. [Ref. 6:p. 8]

4. General Accounting Office Report: Recommendations on Government Procurement

The Department of Defense procurement activities have been the subject of many General Accounting Office (GAO) reports. One particular GAO report of May 1979 captured the state of the military contracting officer community asserting that:

Agencies were appointing many contracting officers not qualified by experience or training. The Commission recognized that although procurement was not yet a profession, the increasing complexity and importance of the procurement process demand a more competent and professional workforce. [Ref. 7:p. 16]

The report repeatedly identified poor execution of reform initiatives, a continued lack of formal training in procurement and a military acquisition career field that was extremely limited. The GAO acknowledged the important structural changes proposed over the last decade but was deeply concerned because “the program is far from complete and momentum is slowing.” With this, the GAO acclaimed, “renewed dedication in the Executive branch and Congressional action is needed”. [Ref. 7:p. 1]

5. The Packard Commission

President Reagan appointed the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management in July 1985. This Commission was chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard and was more commonly known as the Packard Commission. The Commission was established to:

Study defense management policies and procedures, including the budget process, the procurement system, legislative oversight, and the organizational and operational arrangements, both formal and informal, among the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Organization of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Unified and Specified Command System, the military departments and Congress. [Ref. 8:p. 42]

The Commission identified numerous deficiencies in the procurement system that addressed inflexible acquisition procedures, burdensome regulations and laws, a lack of authority for the Program Managers to control programs, and the subjecting of acquisition personnel to never ending bureaucratic obligations for making reports. The Packard Commission took issue with the processes that the acquisition workforce had to work within and with Congress when they specifically stated:

Chances for meaningful improvement will come not from mere regulation but only with major institutional change. Common sense must be made to prevail alike in the enactments of Congress and the operations of the Department. We must give acquisition personnel more authority to do their jobs. [Ref. 9:p. 13]

The Commission recommended to President Reagan that he establish an unambiguous authority for overall acquisition policy and clear accountability for acquisition execution along with the “establishment of business related education and experience criteria...which will provide a basis for the professionalism of their career paths.” [Ref. 9:p. 16]

It also recommended:

Statutory creation of an under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition at a level equivalent to that of the Deputy Secretary who would set overall policy for procurement, and research and development (R&D), and supervise the performance of the entire acquisition system to streamline the acquisition process and create an acquisition executive for each of the military departments and program executives for each major weapon program. [Ref. 8:p. 43]

6. The House Armed Services Committee Report (1990)

For over forty years, studies had been conducted and reports had been issued pertaining to the deficiencies in the procurement community of the Department of Defense regarding its organization, policies and procedures. In 1990, Congress decided to conduct a review of these problems on its own and tasked the House Armed Services Committee with the execution of it. The purpose was to examine the organization, quality and professionalism of the acquisition workforce. The following excerpt from the final report summarizes this by stating:

It is clear that there is no lack of statutory, Executive Order and outside expert identification of problems and recommended changes that should be pursued to improve the quality and professionalism of the acquisition workforce. Yet despite the obvious changes made in the recent past, few are convinced that enough has been done. New and varied proposals to change the organization or character of the acquisition workforce have been espoused with increasing efficiency.

Before considering the adoption of any of these proposals, the Committee on Armed Services believed that it was crucial to conduct an in-depth analysis of the state of the acquisition workforce and any trends that may be evident. Without such an assessment, it is virtually impossible to determine cause and effect, hence to determine with any certainty that proposed solutions to this problem will bring about the desired result.

Thus, the objective of this report is to assess the qualifications and professionalism of the acquisition workforce – both present and past, military and civilian; to review the efforts of the Department of Defense and the military departments to establish and manage the career development of the workforce; and where appropriate, provide recommendations for improving the quality and professionalism of that workforce. [Ref. 10:p. 65]

As the Committee investigated the levels of education and experience of the procurement professionals, it became clear that the previous studies, reports and

Commissions were in fact correct and that major changes were needed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the procurement community. The next step was to enact a body of legislation that would promote such an organizational design change. [Ref. 11:p. 21]

7. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act

In November of 1990, Congress passed into law the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) that addressed significant acquisition reform initiatives. The main thrust of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act was its direction to create, develop and professionalize an acquisition corps in the Department of Defense. Specifically it stated:

The Secretary of Defense shall establish policies and procedures for the effective management (including accession, education, training, and career development) of persons serving in acquisition positions in the Department of Defense. [Ref. 12:p. 1639]

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act called for implementation of these new policies and procedures in a uniform manner within the Department of Defense and also for each of the military departments to form its own acquisition corps. It specifically stated, “A separate acquisition corps may be established for each of the Navy and the Marine Corps.” [Ref. 13]

The services were to designate those positions, or billets, that were acquisition positions in one of eleven areas. Contracting was listed as the third area of those eleven. A career development plan for military contracting officers that allowed for education, training, experience, and assignments necessary for career progression was directed. In

assigning these military contracting officers, it should be noted that there is a statement in the policy that discussed balancing the need “for sufficient time to provide the stability necessary to effectively carry out the duties of the position and to allow for the establishment of responsibility and accountability for actions taken in the position.” Furthermore, it recommended that the military departments should provide, as appropriate, for longer lengths of assignments to acquisition (contracting) positions than assignments to other positions. [Ref. 14]

After categorizing the positions and dividing them into three levels (Levels I, II and III respectively), the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act sets minimum standards for the purpose of professionalizing the acquisition corps. The standards were also divided into three categories as listed below:

1. Education and training requirements.
2. Military grade/rank requirements.
3. Experience requirements. [Ref. 11:pp. 23-26]

The organizational design for the military procurement community was investigated and scrutinized for more than fifty years and now the change was truly beginning to evolve. It began to take the shape of centralized policy and decentralized execution.

B. MARINE CORPS POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ASSIGNING MILITARY OFFICERS TO CONTRACTING OFFICER BILLETS

After reviewing the historical data on the evolution of the organizational changes in the procurement community within the Department of Defense and military departments in general, this study now turns to investigating how the Marine Corps executes its procurement functions. Specifically, it presents an overview of how military contracting officers come into existence in the Marine Corps.

1. HQMC Guidance

Title 10 of the U.S. Code lists qualifications required of an individual who is to serve in an acquisition position as a contracting officer. These qualifications state that such a person must:

1. Have completed all mandatory contracting courses required for a contracting officer at the grade level that the person is serving in;
2. Have at least two years of experience in a contracting position;
3. Have received a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution authorized to grant baccalaureate degrees and have completed at least 24 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) of study from an accredited institution of higher education in any of the following disciplines: accounting, business finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, and organization and management; and
4. Meet such additional requirements, based on the dollar value and the complexity of the contracts awarded or administered in the position, as may be established by the Secretary of Defense for the position. [Ref. 15]

To augment this mandate and further refine it, the Department of Defense has issued DOD Instruction 5000.52M [Ref. 16] and the Secretary of the Navy has issued Secretary of the Navy Instruction 5300.36 [Ref. 17]. Each provided more elaborate guidance at the respected levels. From these three documents, the Marine Corps extracted the pertinent policies and procedures required to remain in conformance with the spirit of the orders. As such, the Marine Corps has become an active participant in assigning military officers to the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, to obtain the education necessary to become qualified military contracting officers.

2. Naval Postgraduate School Education

Marine Corps Order 1520.9F [Ref. 18] is the document that establishes the Special Education Program within the Marine Corps. This program has been a means for the Marine Corps to fill pre-identified, specific Marine Corps billets with Marine officers possessing a graduate level degree. Annually, a Marine Administration Message (MARADMIN) is released that solicits applications for consideration by the Special Education Program selection board. Also in the message is a list of disciplines that applications will be accepted for, with Acquisition and Contract Management being one of them. To apply, the officer fills out an application in the form of an Administrative Action (AA) form and has two original transcripts of his undergraduate education sent directly from the college/university to the Naval Postgraduate School. There are no prerequisites of contracting experience needed in applying for the Acquisition and Contract Management discipline. However, each discipline has different thresholds for acceptance.

The selection process for acceptance into the special education program has been two fold. First, the school itself reviewed the educational records of the officer and through an objective rating system, determined if the officer will be admitted to the school in one of the applied disciplines. Second, the Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department of the Marine Corps holds a board to subjectively review the officer's performance record to consider him for participation. Upon being favorably evaluated by both processes, the officer may then be selected to participate in the Special Education Program and can expect orders assigning him to the Naval Postgraduate School within the year. [Ref. 18]

The Naval Postgraduate School exists:

For the sole purpose of increasing the combat effectiveness of the Navy and Marine Corps. It accomplishes this by providing post-baccalaureate degree and non-degree programs in a variety of sub-specialty areas not available through other educational institutions. [Ref. 19:p. 7]

The mission of the school is to "increase the combat effectiveness of U.S and Allied Armed Forces and enhance the security of the United States through advanced education and research programs focused on the technical, analytical and managerial tools needed to confront defense related challenges of the future." [Ref. 19:p. 7]

The School has been highly regarded by the senior leadership in the Department of the Navy, as witnessed below in the excerpt from the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, stating:

Selection for graduate education at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) is one of the most visible symbols of the confidence the U.S. Navy has rested in an individual's professional ability and career potential.

The rigorous educational programs offered at NPS are among the most technically advanced and academically challenging in the country. They not only fulfill the Navy's need for specialists in many high-tech fields, they also provide students with a sound basis for achieving a broadened perspective on global issues and challenges that lie ahead. [Ref. 19:p. 6]

As an Acquisition and Contract Management student at the Naval Postgraduate School, the officer spends eighteen months studying in a challenging academic curriculum. The Marine Corps officer, who is a student, will spend over 140 in-class hours taking courses in accounting, economics, mathematics, information technology, contract administration, contract pricing and negotiations, policy and budgeting, organization and management, contract law, and strategic management. Upon successful completion of this program, the student becomes DAWIA Level II certified and is reassigned to the fleet as a military contracting officer for a payback tour. [Ref. 19]

3. Payback Tours

As the military has bought billions of dollars worth of equipment, supplies, and services each year, the military contracting officer has negotiated, written and monitored purchasing contracts. The Marine Corps officer, who graduates from the Naval Postgraduate School with an advanced degree in Acquisition and Contract Management, has been assigned a secondary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of 9656, Contracting Officer. This MOS is also an acquisition workforce career field as defined by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act in Title 10 US Code. [Ref. 20]

The newly appointed military contracting officer embarks on a four year payback tour (obligated period of service) within the Marine Corps spending three years in the field contracting structure and one year back in the Fleet Marine Force (FMF). [Ref. 21]

Under the direction of the Marine Corps Installations and Logistics Department, the billets available for contracting officers fall into three general groups:

1. The policy billets, which are located at HQMC, provide guidance and direction on policies;
2. The field contracting billets, which are located at the logistics bases, recruit depots and three major Marine Corps Bases (Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune and Okinawa), that provide all contracting services for their respective mission areas; and
3. The contingency contracting billets, which are located in the Force Service Support Groups at the three major bases mentioned above, that provide contracting support to forces deployed.

It is important to note at this time that the current organizational design does not provide United States Marine Corps contracting officer billets at major buying commands: the Department of the Navy, the Defense Contract Management Agency or other Department of Defense organizations. [Ref. 22:p. 21]

After the greater part of five years in schooling and a payback tour, the Marine Corps military contracting officer is then reassigned to the operational forces in his/her primary Military Occupational Specialty (infantry, artillery, logistics, adjutant, etc). The challenge is clear: after being schooled and trained in the technical field of contracting for such an extended period of time, the officer has undoubtedly fallen behind in his primary Military Occupational Specialty skills. He or she must now work to regain that edge in

order to recover his MOS credibility and be competitive for promotion with his peers. This is a difficult task to endure.

4. The Acquisition Professional Community

Annually, since 1991, a Marine Administration Message has been released by Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) that solicits applications for selection to the Acquisition Professional Community. This program was established in response to mandates in the Title 10 U.S. Code and subsequent Department of Defense Instructions. The Acquisition Professional Community (APC) prepares officers for assignment to senior acquisition positions. The formal board reviews the applications for selection in the fields of program management; communications and computer systems; contracting; systems planning/research/development and engineering; test and evaluation engineering; manufacturing, production and quality assurance; acquisition logistics; and business/cost estimating and financial management. If selected, the officer would then be assigned one of three new Military Occupational Specialties. These are Acquisition Manager (9959), Acquisition Management Officer (9958), or Acquisition Professional Candidate (9957). [Ref. 23] There is a litany of required training, education, rank and experience associated to becoming a member of this community. [Ref. 24]

The disconnect is clear: there is no direct path or continuous flow of performing the technical duties associated with being a contracting officer in the Marine Corps. An officer will enter the service and perform in his/her primary Military Occupational Specialty for 5-10 years. Then, if selected, he/she will attend graduate school at the Naval Postgraduate School and do a payback tour of three years as a contracting officer.

The officer will then return to his/her primary MOS for four to seven years and attempt to reapply to the acquisition community for a follow on tour of duty. In between each of the latter three tours, a lot of valuable knowledge and experience is suppressed. What will be examined later in this study is the feasibility of staying in the technical and challenging MOS of contracting once the officer is originally inducted into the community. It would appear at this point that it is economical from a monetary standpoint and from an educational and experience standpoint.

C. CURRENT EXISTING MARINE CORPS MILITARY OFFICER CONTRACTING BILLETS

As mentioned earlier in this study, all of the current billets available for Marine Corps military contracting officers fall under the HQMC field contracting structure. They are grouped in the three general categories of policy billets, field contracting billets and contingency contracting billets. All three categories together total only 19 billets available for qualified contracting officers within the entire Marine Corps. One of those billets is currently being filled by an officer who did not go through the formal contracting education process discussed earlier and is of a different Military Occupational Specialty. This leaves only 18 billets for qualified military contracting officers. Currently at NPS, there are six officers nearing completion of their contracting education. Upon graduation in December of 2000, these six military contracting officers will be assigned to one of the 18 billets available. That means there will be a 33% turnover in the contracting force at one time. The military contracting officer billets comprise merely 3%

of the Marine Corps Acquisition Workforce. The education and training the officers receive at the Naval Postgraduate School makes them very versatile for billet assignments and would qualify them to fill at least 70% of the billets in the Marine Corps acquisition workforce. [Ref. 11:p. 48] This does not add to the stability of such a technical specialty field and presents a possible “spike” in the learning curve of the military contracting community. The nineteen billets currently slated for qualified military officers are depicted in Figure 2.1 on the following page:

Title	Grade	Command	Location
Contracting Officer	Major	Policy & Oversight Branch, HQMC	Washington DC
Contracting Officer	Major	Policy & Oversight Branch, HQMC	Washington DC
Regional Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Base Camp Butler	Okinawa, Japan
Regional Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune	North Carolina
Regional Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton	California
Regional Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Support Activity	Missouri
Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Systems Command	Virginia
Contracting Officer	Major	Marine Corps Logistics Base	Georgia
Contracting Officer *	Major	Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle Program Office	Virginia
Regional Contracting Officer	Captain	Marine Corps Base 29 Palms	California
Regional Contracting Officer	Captain	MCRD Parris Island	South Carolina
Regional Contracting Officer	Captain	MCRD San Diego	California
Regional Contracting Officer	Captain	MARFORRES	Louisiana
Contracting Officer	Captain	Blount Island Command	Florida
Contingency Contracting Officer	Captain	1 st FSSG	California
Contingency Contracting Officer	Captain	2 nd FSSG	North Carolina
Contingency Contracting Officer	Captain	3 rd FSSG	Okinawa, Japan
Contracting Officer	Major	I MEF	California
Contracting Officer	Major	II MEF	North Carolina

* currently filled by a non-contracting trained officer

Figure 2.1 List of Military Contracting Officer Billets in the USMC From Ref. [25]

Figure 2.2 shows additional contracting offices within the Marine Corps that do not currently have billets for military contracting officers but do have a contracting staff and a contracting mission:

Command/Unit	Location
LBC, HQMC	Washington DC
Regional Contracting Office, HQMC	Washington DC
MCAS Cherry Point	North Carolina
MARFOR PAC	Hawaii
MARFORLANT	Virginia
MCAS Miramar	California
MCAS Yuma	Arizona
MCAS Iwakuni	Japan
MCB Hawaii	Hawaii
MCAS Beaufort	South Carolina
MCAF Quantico	Virginia
Marine Barracks 8 th & I	Washington DC
HQBN, HQMC	Virginia
ARD Office, HQMC	Washington DC
MARFOREUR	Germany
MWTC, Bridgeport	California
MARFOR SOUTH	Florida
MCLB Barstow	California

Figure 2.2 Contracting Offices within the USMC without Military Contracting Officer Billets From Ref. [26]

D. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF USMC MILITARY CONTRACTING OFFICERS

[The Marine Corps Contracting Campaign plan] embodies our commitment for enhancing the keystone support that the contracting community must provide for our Marine Corps to continue to be the nation's elite fighting corps.

LtGen. McKissock

The United States Marine Corps contracting campaign plan begins by discussing how the contracting community has been “historically encumbered by a morass of statutes, policies and procedures.” The move now is to streamline the process through introducing and implementing innovative technology and knowledge management systems. It acknowledges the fact that as the business world changes, so does the Marine Corps. It also addresses the paraphrased facts that “no longer can one rest on methods and procedures of the past.” As the technological and regulatory requirements of the procurement process change, it impacts the core competencies of the contracting community, which in turn challenges the members of this community to continuously update their skill base. The underlying vision is a “pledge to continuously evolve with emerging technologies and strive to enhance (the contacting personnel’s) core competencies to develop the premier DOD contracting workforce.” [Ref. 27:pp. 1-2]

There are numerous strategies and objectives presented in the Marine Corps Contracting Campaign plan. Three are pertinent to this study:

1. Developing a contracting career track for civilian Marines;
2. Exploring a strategy to optimize resources; and
3. Educating and recruiting personnel to upgrade critical technology skills required in the modern contracting environment.

These will be evaluated in-depth in a later chapter, but it is important to note a few things about each one. Regarding the first issue above, this study clearly stated previously that it was not going to review the civilian or enlisted Marine contacting

community. However, the importance of presenting issue number one above is the mere fact that this is mentioned as a strategy while an identical strategy for military contracting officers is omitted or not addressed.

Issue number two above looks to optimize resources, and in the researcher's opinion, the military contracting officers are an important and vital portion of those resources.

Lastly, issue number three above is concerned with educating and recruiting personnel to flow with the changes and keep the contracting force stable. This presents another characteristic that military contacting officers can provide if the organizational design is re-configured as such. [Ref. 27:pp. 3-13]

As Purchasing and Contracting Managers, military officers review requests for supplies and services, prepare bid invitations or requests for proposals for contracts with civilian firms, review bids or proposals and award contracts. They also prepare formal contracts, specifying all necessary terms and conditions, and review work to make sure that it meets the requirements of the contract. Some helpful fields of study include management and business or public administration. The ability to develop detailed plans, an interest in work that requires accuracy and strict attention to detail, and an interest in negotiating have all been found to be helpful attributes for a contacting manager to possess as well. [Ref. 28:p. 262]

The United States Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) manual states that:

Contracting officers evaluate contract requirements, specifications, bids, proposals, and subsequent contractor performance. When appointed in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation, contracting officers

have authority to enter into, administer, or terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings. Contracting officers may bind the Government only to the extent of the authority delegated to them. [Ref. 29:pp. 1-60]

Specific duties of contracting officers are also listed in the MOS manual. Those duties consist of:

1. Provide planning, programming, budgeting and acquisition support to various Marine Corps appropriation sponsors; review acquisition plans, statements of work, performance work statements, economy act orders, specifications, requests for proposals and invitations for bids; evaluate contract proposals, bids and contractor performance; award and administer contracts;
2. Supervise others in the conduct of Marine Corps contracting functions;
3. Make determinations and findings as well as determine obligations for the settlement of controversies and protests on Government contracts; and
4. Perform contingency contracting functions in support of the conduct of war, operations other than war, exercises and deployments. [Ref. 29:pp. 1-61]

The actual missions carried out by each military contracting officer vary depending upon the individual unit the officer is assigned. The policy billets at HQMC (I&L) provide the guidance and direction, while the field contracting officer billets mainly provide contracting services for the Marine Corps Base activities and the contingency contracting officer billets support the forces deployed. While there is a particular billet on the east coast at a specific command, the identical billet at the equivalent west coast unit operates in an entirely different manner. The best example of this is the contracting officer at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island as

compared to the contracting officer at MCRD San Diego. The MCRD Parris Island office is physically located at Parris Island, South Carolina, and supports the East coast recruit depot, the recruiting districts and substations east of the Mississippi river and the major bases in the area. The MCRD San Diego office is supposed to perform the same functions for the west coast recruit depot and the recruiting districts and substations west of the Mississippi river. However, technically the MCRD San Diego contracting office does not exist. The officer assigned to that contracting officer billet has relocated to the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton contracting office and supports the general contracting mission of that region through that office. The attention given to all the recruiting districts and substations west of the Mississippi river becomes more of a collateral duty.

A similar organizational pattern for mission support discussed above in the two MCRD contracting offices is reflected in the military contracting officer chain of command throughout the Marine Corps. Referring to the two MCRD contracting officers on each coast, the officer filling the billet at Parris Island reports to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Supplies and Services who is a Colonel/0-6 equivalent and the officer filling the MCRD San Diego billet reports to the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton contracting officer who is a Major/0-4 equivalent. Not only do these two officers report to the senior officers noted above, but they also have their performance evaluations written by them annually. Similar inconsistencies exist like this in the military contracting officer community throughout the Marine Corps contracting activities. [Ref. 30]

E. MARINE CORPS LEGAL COMMANDS

The United States Marine Corps Fleet Marine Force (FMF) is made up of three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) that cover the entire span of the globe in an operational sense. I MEF is located on the west coast of the United States, II MEF is located on the east coast of the United States, and III MEF is located in Okinawa, Japan. Under each MEF, there is a division, an aircraft wing and a Force Service Support Group (FSSG). This supports the Marine Corps concept of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The Divisions execute amphibious assault operations and other such operations as may be directed, while supported by Marine aviation, Force Service Support units and other supporting forces. The Aircraft Wings participate as the supporting air component of the Fleet Marine Force in the seizure and defense of advanced naval bases and conduct such operations as necessary for the prosecution of a naval campaign. The Force Service Support Groups provide combat service support to all the elements of a MEF. In doing so, all of the elements of the FSSG are structured to provide permanently organized sub-elements to support independently deployed units.

The units that make up a FSSG are: a Headquarters and Service (H&S) Battalion, a Maintenance Battalion, a Supply Battalion, an Engineer Support Battalion, a Transportation and Landing Support Battalion, a Medical Battalion, and a Dental Battalion. The H&S Battalion can be dissected even further and the reader would find that it is made up of a Headquarters Company, a Service Company, a Communications Company, and a Military Police Company. Within the Service Company of the H&S Battalion are the bulk of the Marine Corps legal specialists. They form the Legal

Services Support Section (LSSS) consisting of over 100 Marines. It is this unit that is tasked with providing general support to the MEF in terms of legal services. [Ref. 31]

The Legal Services Support Section is the command entity that provides internal and external support for the requirements of MAGTF elements. This is done by using legal services support teams. Each major subordinate command (Division/Aircraft Wing/Force Service Support Group) has a Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) section that coordinates legal support services accordingly. These teams work closely with the major subordinate command Staff Judge Advocate and are flexible in nature. They are employed at appropriate times and places, in various sizes and numbers, as well as various compositions, depending upon the mission, size and MAGTF composition; expected duration of the operation; and according to the scheme of maneuver involved in the operations. Just as the war fighting major subordinate commands have small SJA sections, so do the many Marine Corps Base garrison units, Expeditionary Units and Air Stations. These units also do the coordinating and liaison work with the Legal Services Support Section of the FSSGs who are the primary workhorses for Marine Corps legal activity. [Ref. 32]

F. THE DEFENSE CONTRACT MANAGEMENT AGENCY (DCMA)

The Defense Contract Management Agency is really on the front lines of our efforts to change the way we do business in the Department of Defense. This assures our war fighters have the very best equipment at an affordable price.

Dr. Jacques Gansler

Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
[Ref. 33]

The beginning of the 20th century saw technological advances open a new field for contracting and contract management. In February 1908, the Army's Signal Corps awarded a contract to the Wright brothers to produce a flying machine that would transport two men at 40 miles per hour for at least 60 minutes. Management of the first U.S. military aircraft contract was simply a detailed final inspection of the final product. The U.S. military considered contract management to be limited to inspection.

In World War I, the largest military mobilization since the Civil War, the government shelved competitive bidding as the Army awarded contracts to clothe and equip the troops. The Army and Navy awarded contracts for aircraft to grow an infant industry. In 1916, Congress authorized 40 aircraft inspections, and the following year, the Army Signal Corps formed an aircraft inspection department to bolster production. It was the first organizational element solely concerned with managing military aircraft contracts. Officials realized they needed a responsible inspection system to detect defects in critical areas and have them corrected during the manufacturing process. This paved the way for the first in-plant inspection offices.

As the airplane dominated procurement between the world wars, the Army Air Service set up the first peacetime in-plant inspection office in 1921 at Boeing Aircraft Co. in Seattle, Wash., and at the Douglas Aircraft Co. in Santa Monica, Calif., in 1923. To bolster the aviation industry that slumped after World War I, Congress in 1926 required competitive pricing for aircraft and, with the Navy Aviation Act and Army Air Corps Act, increased the flexibility of the procurement process. The law established a special branch within the Air Corps to supervise the inspection activities of three

procurement district offices — New York City, New York, Dayton, Ohio and Santa Monica, California. Air Corps plant representative offices managed contracts at various manufacturing sites.

In 1934, after complaints of excessive profits by Navy contractors, Congress passed the Vinson-Trammell Act of 1934, to limit profits on specific types of government contracts. The law also opened the plants and records of Navy contractors and subcontractors to inspection and audit.

By 1940, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered aircraft production to soar to 50,000 airplanes a year, wartime yet again highlighted problems with military contract management.

The services then decentralized their procurement processes after World War II. The Air Force, separated from the Army in 1947, created six intermediate headquarters and increased its plant representative offices from four to 36.

Contract management began to change its focus in the early 1950s. During the Korean War, contract management professionals assured the contractor's performance by reviewing the company's systems and procedures, resulting in more efficient contract management.

During that time, procurement turned to negotiated and cost reimbursement contracts for major weapons and aerospace systems in the 1950s and 1960s. The Army, Air Force and Navy set up separate commands to oversee contracting. For instance, in 1962 the newly established Army Materiel Command assumed responsibility for the procurement functions of the Army's technical services.

In February 1962, more than 20 defense procurement officials met in Williamsburg, Virginia, with a task to develop a plan for establishing uniform field contract management functions such as quality control, review of subcontracting processes, property administration, industrial security review, and price proposal reviews. Three months later, Project 60 established the Directorate of Contract Administration Services and set up a pilot test region in Philadelphia.

By 1964, all of the contract administration offices in the military service and the Defense Supply Agency consolidated as the Defense Contract Administration Service (DCAS). The new organization provided contract administration, contractor performance surveillance, inspection and acceptance of materiel, accounting for government property, security clearance of contractor facilities, and personnel to handle classified information, and payment of contractors.

Certain plant representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force, situated in key plants producing major weapons systems were not consolidated. Nor were the military and civilian construction contractors of the Army Corps of Engineers, Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks, and Navy Supervisors of Shipbuilding.

Further examination of defense contract administration in 1975 and a study by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) in 1977 led to more streamlining, further reductions and a consolidation of efforts.

Increases in defense spending in the 1980s led to still more regulations of contracting, such as the Federal Acquisition Regulation of 1984 that is a single regulation governing procurement practices of all federal agencies. In July 1989, a Defense task

force recommended contract consolidation under a Defense Contract Management Agency to save almost \$30 million over five years. The contract management oversight instead became a function of a Defense Contract Management Command under DLA.

Tremendous savings occurred over the next ten years. Between 1989 and 1999, DCMC went from 14 regions and districts down to three. The number of Contract Administration Offices went from 144 to 67, and the number of employees shrank from 26,500 in 1989, to 12,500 in 2000.

With the major consolidation of contract management completed, the Department of Defense implemented the 1989 task force recommendation, and the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) became a separate agency March 27, 2000.

The Defense Contract Management Agency is the Department of Defense contract manager, responsible for ensuring federal acquisition programs, supplies, and services are delivered on time, within cost, and meet performance requirements. This involves managing 325,000 prime contracts with current work valued at \$852 billion. As a result, DCMA directly contributes to United States military readiness.

The Defense Contract Management Agency is headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and is organized into three Districts: 1) East, 2) West, and 3) International. The Defense Contract Management Agency oversees 67 Contract Management Offices that are responsible for the work performed at over 900 operating locations worldwide. DCMA employs over 12,000 civilian and military professionals to carry out its mission. These professionals serve as "information brokers" for military buying agencies — both during the acquisition cycle and throughout the life of a contract. Employees interact on a

daily basis with customers to ensure that the services DCMA provides meet customers' needs:

1. Pre-Award: DCMA provides pre-contractual advice services during the acquisition phase to help construct effective solicitations, identify potential performance risks, select capable contractors, and write contracts that are easily administered with less risk of costly modifications.
2. Post-Award: DCMA maintains insight into the contractors' processes to ensure product, cost, and schedules are in compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract. This includes on-site surveillance and program-specific processes that cannot be monitored by off-site buying agencies.

The comprehensive, top-level support DCMA provides to its customers has earned the Agency a leadership role in the DoD Defense Reform Initiatives that will continue to guide the Department throughout the 21st century. [Ref. 34]

G. THE UNITED STATES ARMY ACQUISITION CORPS

The Office, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Procurement) (ODASA(P)) is responsible for management and oversight of all procurement and procurement related functions and organizations, acquisition reform, and the industrial base, Army wide. This includes providing contracting assistance and procurement policy direction; management of the procurement career field; stimulation, identification, implementation and oversight of acquisition reforms; guidance on weapon systems acquisition; and industrial base

management and policy guidance. ODASA(P) serves the entire Army acquisition community, the Army Senior Procurement Executive and Acquisition Executive, and the Army Secretariat and Staff. It is also responsible for related strategic planning and enterprise level metrics for the Army acquisition and contracting community.

The Army Acquisition Corps has a detailed policy that ensures the professionals develop and stay current in leadership, disciplinary and functional skills that augment the minimum education, training and experience. Included in this policy is a plan to re-focus the Army's efforts to maintain its "world class career program and create the future".

[Ref. 35]

The United States Army has almost 600 contracting and industrial management officers. Of that, there are 199 contingency contracting officer billets. At the theater level, contracting support is found in the Army Service Component Command and in the Theater Support Command. These billets perform the Head of Contracting agency (HCA) and Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC) functions. Duties include planning, oversight and management of in-theater contracting. The operational level has contracting personnel at both the Division and Corps levels. As buying organizations, they are also responsible for writing appropriate level contracting support plans. In a proactive effort to support its mission through the 21st century, the Army has made organizational changes to meet its requirements. This has resulted in increasing its contingency contracting forces alone by over 67%, or 80 billets, since 1997. [Ref. 36:pp.

6-35]

In addition to theater level, operational level and contingency contracting billets discussed above, the Army also aggressively staffs the Defense Contract Management Agency with qualified contracting officers. There are 42 Program Management Offices that are responsible for an array of products that are not unique to the Army, but inherent to all the services. They have more than two hundred contracting personnel that maintain billions of dollars of contracts and provide oversight to over 2500 contractors. The Army also staffs Joint Defense Program Offices for biological defense, missile defense, military traffic management, communications and electronics, and special operations. [Ref. 35]

The transfer to the Army Acquisition Corps as a contracting officer is a permanent one. It is a permanent command structured to support the contracting requirements of the Army today and in the future. As an Army officer in the fleet, an officer will fill billets and perform the duties associated with his primary military occupational specialty (infantry, artillery, armor, supply, etc). At around the eight-year point of time in service and rank of mid-level Captain or higher, the officer applies to transfer into the Acquisition Corps. Along with the rank/time in service prerequisite, the officer must have a competitive file in terms of his Officer Evaluation Reports and Officer Record Brief and also have his company command tour behind him. If the lateral move is approved, the officer is formally educated in contracting at the Naval Postgraduate School or another similar institution and becomes a contracting officer in the Army for the remainder of his time in the service. The field has a career path for growth and promotion purposes and has the hundreds of contracting officer billets mentioned earlier for the officer to apply his experience, expertise and technical knowledge. As the Army

Acquisition Corps prepares to celebrate its tenth birthday this year, it continues to refine the way it conducts business and adjusts its organizational design to be exceptionally prepared to support and lead the Army through the 21st century with a qualified, permanent and stable contracting force. [Ref. 37]

H. SUMMARY

In the Department of Defense, the procurement community has seen many attempts to change the policies, procedures and organizational design in which it operates. From the Revolutionary War period up through today, different commissions, reports and studies have made multiple recommendations for improvement. It is important to note that in most cases the recommendations were generally the same. The procurement policies and procedures are cumbersome while the structure of the personnel force is disjointed and unstable. All three characteristics present a significant burden in trying to get the contracting mission executed in a professional, efficient and effective manner. As each of the commissions, reports and studies continued to identify the same deficiencies year after year, the question has to be raised as to why swift, efficient and conclusive action wasn't taken early and as often as necessary to promote unyielding results of success in the procurement community?

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act that was passed by Congress in 1990 was the first real step in the right direction. It began to create the sense of a truly centralized policy and decentralized execution concept. As such, the United States Marine Corps has set up a good point of entry to the contracting world through its

participation in the Special Education Program. The military contracting officers obtain the background in contracting theory needed in order to apply it in real world applications during a pay back tour. The issue remains to be analyzed in Chapter IV of this study as to whether the current design of employment of the contracting officers is in the best interests of those officers and the service and if it is too disjointed to promote efficiency and effectiveness.

This chapter has also investigated how the United States Army trains and employs its contracting officer force. From that it can be seen that those Army officers acquire the technical skills and education in contracting and continue to use it in every tour of duty thereafter. In addition to providing the support needed to the Army for its contracting requirements, the officers and the Army broaden their field of knowledge, experience and expertise by performing the contracting functions at billets in the Defense Contract Management Agency. This chapter also identified that within the Defense Contract Management Agency there are no billets filled by qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers.

Finally, this chapter briefly presented the overall organizational design of the United States Marine Corps. It further broke down the major subordinate command responsible for providing combat service support. Not only did it outline the current units with contracting missions, some staffed with qualified military contracting officers and some without, but it also presented background information on a stable force structure in which the Marine Corps legal specialists operate.

III. ADDITIONAL DATA

A. INTERVIEWS

For the purpose of this study and in addition to the data collected in Chapter II, the researcher interviewed various members of the contracting community. The individuals who were interviewed fall under an array of different commands that organize their contracting sections differently and execute their missions in a somewhat decentralized manner. Highlights of the interviews and key points are presented in the sections that follow.

1. USMC Military Contracting Officers

Eleven out of sixteen officers currently in the contracting community said that at the end of their payback tour they will more than likely leave active duty service and get out of the Marine Corps. That amounts to almost 70% of the current contracting community. Six of those eleven mentioned above said they will definitely be getting out. From the five officers of the sixteen who said they will stay on active duty in the Marine Corps after their payback tour: two recently got promoted which means an additional obligated time in service; one will be retiring shortly after the payback tour; and another will wait to see if he is promoted. If he is not promoted, he would likely join the other eleven officers in the decision to leave the Marine Corps.

All of the Marine Corps military contracting officers interviewed were educated at the Naval Postgraduate School and almost 50% of them have furthered their professional

education by attending Defense Acquisition University follow-on contracting courses (Con 234, 237, etc). In applying that education and performing their duties as contracting officers, each procures items from the three general categories of equipment, supplies and services.

In conducting the interviews with these officers, the researcher posed a question about how the contracting officers felt about doing a follow-on tour in contracting with the Defense Contract Management Agency if given the opportunity. All but one excitedly and enthusiastically said it was a great idea and they would thoroughly enjoy such a broadening opportunity. The one dissident had recently been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and wanted to leave the contracting field in order to return to the particular unit he had come from prior to his contracting tour to be the executive officer for that command. Aside from that, 100% of the contracting officers that were interviewed united in saying that the move to becoming a qualified contracting officer should be a lateral move. That means that once the service (and the officer) makes the commitment to retain, educate and employ him as a contracting officer, every tour after that should be in the form of filling a contracting type billet. Each officer echoed the other by saying that contracting was a technically challenging and detail demanding profession that must be continuously utilized in order to remain proficient and current in it. Some even offered the opinion that in order to retain these officers with such an expertise that a lateral move would be a sure way to do it. Another key point that all of the current contracting officers interviewed unanimously agreed on was the fact that the Marine Corps needs more qualified contracting officers. For reasons as simple as

contracting officers bringing something different to the table to support the war fighters and as generic as applying a Marine Corps perspective in a joint arena, each could not emphasize the point enough.

For purposes to be analyzed later in this study, it is important to also note that all of the field contracting officers do receive some sort of legal support through their local or regional area counsels. This support generally consists of reviews and/or advising. At the larger commands on the West coast, the contracting officers use the Western Area Counsel Office (WACO), while the larger commands on the East coast use the Eastern Area Counsel Office (EACO). The smaller commands throughout the Marine Corps use local support activity counsels.

The overall feeling about the readiness of the military contracting officer force in general was that it was high. The interviewees highlighted the fact that the force is currently a mature one; most have been in their current contracting officer billets for over a year and a half now. Every officer did point out that this was not the case when they first began their payback tours. Again, the contracting officers united in saying the education they received at the Naval Postgraduate School was superb, however it was strictly theory. Understandingly, what was missing was practical application. The three areas continuously identified by the interviewees as deficiencies were the education and training in filling out of the particular forms used in the contracting environment, the concepts of contingency contracting and the understanding and use of the Standard Procurement System (SPS). Each officer said those were the activities most associated with filling the billets in the Marine Corps contracting community once they began their

payback tour. It should also be stated that the contracting officers said the first full year of their payback tour was spent learning the “system” and getting adjusted to their new positions. After that point in time, they had the ability, confidence and understanding of the “real world” in Marine Corps contracting.

Ten of the current military contracting officers interviewed specifically said that they thought entering the contracting field with a background or a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) in financial management, supply or logistics is a big advantage. More so, that such a background lends itself to a better understanding of how the world of combat service support operates. They again echoed how valuable the Naval Postgraduate School education was and that an officer entering into the contract realm from the combat arms community would be equally set up for success, however, often the learning curve was a little steeper in such cases. The most important characteristic or trait that was offered by the interviewees as being critical for contracting officers was the need for Fleet Marine Force (FMF) experience. The reason stated for this was that the Fleet Marine Force is the customer; that is who the field contracting officers support and that is who they must intimately operate with when they are deployed.

Eight of the current contracting officers interviewed stated that they were planning on applying to the Acquisition Professional Community. In discussing this area, all eight voiced two main concerns. The first was a concern about their level of primary MOS expertise after being away from it for five years. The second concern was after going back to their primary MOS and being away from the contracting community for three to four years, they were concerned about the ability to stay current with their

contracting skill set and all the regulatory, policy and procedural changes during their absenteeism. At this point, the officers again echoed in unison about the idea of remaining in the contracting field for the remainder of their time in the service versus returning to their primary MOS “two steps behind” everyone else. [Refs. 30, 38-52]

The Regional Contracting Officer (RCO) for the western recruiting region works out of the base contracting office at Camp Pendleton, California. However, his primary staff members are physically located at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) in San Diego, California, forty miles to the South. He has become a member of the portion of the contracting community that is attempting to consolidate contracting offices through “geo-regionalization”. As such, the MCRD San Diego, Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton and 1st Force Service Support Group (FSSG) contracting officers all work out of the same office. Each focuses on his particular unit’s contracting mission while creating a bigger, more readily available pool of expertise, knowledge, and experience. The Regional Contracting Officer for the western recruiting region stated his mission as contracting equipment, supplies and services in support of Marine forces deployed and in garrison. In executing his mission, the Regional Contracting Officer for the western recruiting region provides oversight for contracting actions to the recruiting districts West of the Mississippi River. He also considers his customer base to be I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), the 1st Marine Division, the 1st FSSG, and the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing as well. In his office at MCB Camp Pendleton he has no people working directly for him to accomplish this mission while he operates as a consultant to the recruiting stations and helps with the general MCB contracting mission. The Marine

Corps Base Camp Pendleton contracting officer who is a Major/O-4 equivalent writes his annual performance evaluation and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics who is a Colonel/O-6 equivalent reviews it. The Regional Contracting Officer for the western recruiting region has an unlimited warrant and a primary military occupational specialty of aviation supply. He feels that a background in a service support field, the ability to communicate effectively, and someone who is customer oriented are key elements in becoming a successful contracting officer. Under the general support concept, he also provides assistance to the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, California, contracting office. That office is 35 miles South and has a bona fide contracting mission with no military contracting officer billet currently available. To help the enlisted Marine currently performing the contracting mission for Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, the Regional Contracting Officer for the western recruiting region provides assistance as often as needed. The Regional Contracting Officer feels that all of the air stations in the Marine Corps have contracting requirements and need a qualified Marine Corps military contracting officer billet created at each one. The idea of establishing a permanent contracting command in the Marine Corps and making the transition via a lateral move is a concept that this officer feels strongly towards. He is supposed to be returning to this primary military occupational specialty of aviation supply in the near future. He had voiced concerns about the fact that he has been away from it for five years and things have changed. "It's a high tech MOS and I don't know what's going on in terms of software, new databases, automated procedures, etc." He is also concerned about not being viewed as competitive for promotion with his peers as a result of his hiatus from

the aviation supply community to do his contracting tour. Lastly, he feels that after the training and education he received, possessing an unlimited contracting warrant and having the utmost authority in his contracting duties, that going back to his primary military occupational specialty would be a step backwards. [Ref. 30]

There is a military contracting officer billet on the East coast at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island, South Carolina, that is supposed to be identical in nature (structure, organization, and mission) to the one on the West coast at MCRD San Diego. This billet is appropriately titled Regional Contracting Officer for the eastern recruiting region. The officer is physically located at the Parris Island recruit depot and has a staff of 14 contracting specialists (both civilian and enlisted Marines) to carry out the mission. The office's mission is to support all spending for Parris Island and the recruiting districts of the Eastern region. That is exactly what this Regional Contracting Officer does. His customer base consists of 23 recruiting sub-stations East of the Mississippi River, the recruit depot at Parris Island, a Marine detachment at Fort Gordon, MCAS Beaufort and the Beaufort Naval Hospital. As a contracting officer with an unlimited warrant, he contracts for equipment, supplies and services to include facility contracting (with the exception of MILCON projects). The process of evaluating his performance is very different than his counterpart on the West coast. The Regional Contracting Officer for the eastern recruiting region has his annual performance evaluation written by the Assistant Chief of Staff for Supply and Services who is a Colonel/O-6 equivalent and has it reviewed by the Commanding General for the recruit depot who is a Brigadier General/O-7 equivalent. The reporting senior who writes his

fitness report is also a customer. The Regional Contracting officer currently filling this contracting billet has some concerns about that concept. He stated:

There is a Department of the Navy memo that says the senior contracting officer in the area should report to the senior commander in the region. If that Regional Contracting Officer reports to someone other than him, there's the possibility for the Regional Contracting Officer to report to a customer. That might skew some people's priorities.

The Regional Contracting Officer for the eastern recruiting region felt that Fleet Marine Force experience prior to coming to the contracting community is a "must" as it helps the individual understand mission needs and the support concept. When asked how he would feel about doing a tour with the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) as a follow on contracting tour after his current one, he said that it was a great idea and he'd love to do it. "After sinking money into my education and adding to that my experience, I would be able to provide better support." While he felt that the military contracting officer force currently deserves a readiness rating of "good", he envisions a greater demand for support and expansionism in the future as the Marine Corps operational tempo (OPTEMPO) increases and its role in the National Military Strategy widens. As such, he feels that the Marine Corps definitely needs (and would benefit from) more qualified contracting officers in its ranks. The Regional Contracting Officer said the best vehicle for that is to make it a lateral move into the contracting MOS field. He is convinced that it is the only way to best retain officers who have the expertise in the contracting field and made a point to mention that it is how the Marine Corps does it with the enlisted contracting specialists. At the rank of Sergeant, the enlisted Marine applies for a lateral move out of his current military occupational specialty and into the

contracting community. That Marine then goes to a formal school to obtain the education and skills needed to become a contracting specialist and returns to the fleet as such. From then on out, the remainder of his time in the Marine Corps is spent as a contracting specialist. Without a similar opportunity for the military contracting officers in the Marine Corps, this particular Regional Contracting Officer feels constrained. He has aspirations of applying his sharpened business applications to improve the Marine Corps but doesn't foresee it as possible after his payback tour. "I could be a CEO somewhere with my experience, CPA and CPCM credentials, but here I can never be the commandant and won't be given a follow on tour as a contracting officer." [Ref. 38]

The Regional Contracting Officer at the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) Albany, Georgia, performs the mission of base support contracting for MCLB Albany and special projects contracting Material Command. Material Command is made up of MCLB Barstow, MCLB Albany, Blount Island Command and Marine Corps Systems Command. As the procurement contracting officer for logistics support contracts, this Regional Contracting Officer said he works more for Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) then for MCLB Albany. With an unlimited warrant, he finds himself administering contracts for the new Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) truck, the Chemical and Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) and other types of Contractor Logistics Support (CLS) contracts. The Director of Contracts who is a Colonel/O-6 equivalent writes his annual performance evaluation and the Chief of Staff for the Logistics Base who is also a Colonel/O-6 equivalent reviews it. Considering the workload he has, he feels it would be a good idea to have another qualified contracting

officer billet at his site to spread load the mission requirements. He is also in favor of contracting officers going on to the Defense Contract Management Agency for a follow on tour in contracting in order to continue to serve in a contracting capacity. With "not enough contracting officers in programs wearing green suits", he also echoed what the majority of the other officers stated in saying contracting should be its own primary military occupational specialty. He envisions a lateral move to be the best way to accomplish this as well. In this particular Regional Contracting Officer's opinion, the opportunities to continue doing contracting after his payback tour are far better outside of the Marine Corps than in it, hence his desire to leave the service. [Ref. 39]

The contracting officer at the Blount Island Command in Jacksonville, Florida, provides all the contracting support for the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) program. The Commanding Officer of Blount Island who is a Colonel/0-6 equivalent writes his annual performance evaluation and the Commanding General of MCLB Albany who is a Brigadier General/0-7 equivalent reviews it. As a contacting officer with an unlimited warrant, he too feels that he could provide excellent service to the Defense Contract Management Agency on a follow-on tour as a contracting officer with that command. Without such an opportunity, he feels qualified contracting officers are wasted. He also stated that "with the contracting community being such a small one, the Marine Corps would benefit by allowing these officers to do such a tour". He feels very strongly that the Marine Corps needs more contracting officers, that it should make the transition to the community be a lateral move, and that such an action would help retain the highly skilled military contracting officers the Marine Corps has today. [Ref. 40]

Each of the three Force Service Support Groups (FSSG) in the Marine Corps has one qualified military contracting officer billet. The researcher interviewed the Contingency Contracting Officers (CCO) from the 2nd FSSG located at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and 1st FSSG located at Camp Pendleton, California. Their mission is to provide contracting support during the time of contingencies to the forward deployed units. From their offices, they provide individuals to the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) that rotate around the globe every six months from their geographical regions. The Contingency Contracting Officers have their annual performance evaluations written by the Officer-In-Charge of the Supply Management Unit (OIC of the SMU) who is a Lieutenant Colonel/0-5 equivalent and the Commanding Officer of Supply Battalion who is a Colonel/0-6 equivalent reviews it. It is appropriate to note at this time that this is the first instance where the reporting chain on one coast is identical to the one on the opposite coast for the same type of unit. Each officer continued to echo the same findings reported earlier: that the opportunity to do a follow on tour in contracting at DCMA would be a welcomed one; that the Marine Corps needs more contracting officers; and that the transition to the military occupational specialty of contracting should be a permanent lateral move. [Refs. 41 & 42]

In discussing the process of coordinating contracting support for the Marine Expeditionary Units, it was determined by the Contingency Contracting Officers that this concept should be done through liaison with the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) contracting officers. The Contingency Contracting Officer for the 2nd FSSG felt that the billet of the MEF contracting officer should be the rank of a Major and one who is doing

a second tour in contracting. This is because of the nature of the billet that primarily deals with writing contracting plans and annexes that are integrated with the operational plans (OPLANS). He thinks that someone who has "been there, done that" would be able to perform the functions more effectively. [Ref. 42]

The situation at the 1st FSSG is a little more complex. The contracting officer that is currently assigned to the I MEF contracting officer billet (who is supposed to be the officer that the 1st FSSG Contingency Contracting Officer makes liaison with) for all intensive purposes is not there. The I MEF contracting officer is a school trained and fully qualified contracting officer, however, he comes from an undermanned primary military occupational specialty field and he is being allowed to work exclusively in that primary MOS field. This results in the Contingency Contracting Officer at the 1st FSSG being "dual hatted" in an already busy office. The biggest problem he finds next to this is the lack of proper use of his contracting services due to a lack of exposure. He has to find time and ways to educate seniors as to what the contracting office can bring to the table to assist in the various missions. [Ref. 41]

The researcher also interviewed military personnel in the contracting community who are in charge of contracting offices within the Marine Corps that do not currently have billets for qualified military contracting officers. These units ranged from major commands such as the Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) and Marine Forces South (MARFOR SOUTH) to the Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, and the various Marine Corps Air Stations (MCAS). The Marine in charge of contracting for MARFORPAC, the major command that supports and controls the forces in the Pacific

Rim area, is a Staff Sergeant/E-6 equivalent. She works for a Marine Corps Lieutenant/0-1/0-2 equivalent that is formally trained in the MOS of supply. It is important to note that the MOS of supply does not provide any education or schooling in the practice of contracting. If the Staff Sergeant in contracting has any contracting questions or problems, she does not turn to the supply officer but goes directly to Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) in Washington, D.C. She feels strongly that "an actual trained contracting officer would be better to have assigned to [that] office." As such, she too thinks that the Marine Corps would benefit by having more qualified contracting officers available for contracting assignments. She also stated that a good way to alleviate the instability in the military contracting officer force would be to make the move a permanent one in the form of a military occupational specialty lateral move. She said that "it would be much more beneficial for the contracting community." [Ref. 53]

The same position at MARFOR SOUTH in Miami, Florida, is filled by a Gunnery Sergeant/E-7 equivalent. His remarks were virtually identical to the Staff Sergeant's at MARFORPAC and he went on to say:

It is a loss to our community by pulling [qualified military contracting officers] out of our field. Our needs are too great today to allow this. The Marine Corps needs to do something to fix this.

He feels that the officers will lose their primary MOS skill sets and be challenged in trying to remain competitive in that MOS. At the other end, he feels that after going back to their primary MOS and being away from the contracting spectrum, the officers will then see their contracting skills deteriorate rapidly because it is such a technical field

that is continuously changing. He stands as a big advocate to make contracting a permanent field/military occupational specialty for Marine Corps officers. [Ref. 54]

The military contracting officer at Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, is a Navy Lieutenant/0-3 equivalent who is a member of the Navy Supply Corps. His mission is to support the Marine forces and tenant activities at the base by contracting for supplies and services. He has no formal contracting education and never attended the Naval Postgraduate School. He executes his duties on the basis of extensive On-the-Job-Training (OJT) in contracting. While he is limited to the simplified acquisition threshold of \$100,000 for contracting purposes, he must go directly to/through HQMC, Washington, D.C., for any actions above that amount. He too feels the Marine Corps needs more contracting officers, that a lateral move seems to be the most common sense approach to do it and that:

The current way doesn't make any sense. It is a waste of time. [Contracting] is a very, very technical field, equivalent to the need for a law degree, and a Marine Corps officer who is qualified in contracting should and could be filling this billet. [Ref. 55]

The contracting officer for the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, is a Navy Lieutenant Commander/0-4 equivalent who was formally educated at the Naval Postgraduate School. He is another example of a Navy officer performing the contracting functions to support the missions of a Marine Corps Base/Air Station. He has his annual performance evaluation written directly by the Commanding Officer of the Air Station who is a Colonel/0-6 equivalent. When asked why a Navy Officer was at a Marine Corps Air Station performing the contracting functions instead of a qualified Marine Corps contracting officer, he stated:

SECNAV Instruction 5451.1A dated 15 November 1971 says that whenever there are any Department of the Navy Aircraft present, there will be a Navy Supply Corps officer present to provide support. However, it is dated and I will be rotating soon and a Navy officer will not fill this billet again. The Base S-4 officer, a Marine Corps Major who is not schooled in contracting, will take over this role.

He feels that the Marine Corps would benefit by having more contracting officers because "it would definitely enhance the Marine Corps' expeditionary capabilities." To support this concept, he said that the idea of having a qualified Marine Corps military contracting officer at the air station would be a great job for a Captain/0-3 equivalent to get the needed field experience. [Ref. 56] The Gunnery Sergeant who fills the same billet at the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, echoed these same remarks and thinks the Marine Corps military contracting officer force "needs to be more of a mainstay." [Ref. 57]

2. USMC Civilian Contracting Personnel

The researcher interviewed Mr. Paul Direnzo of Headquarters Marine Corps located in Washington, D.C. He is the Deputy Director for Policy and Oversight of Contracting, and right now the top senior official in the Marine Corps contracting community. The mission of his office is to provide all field contracting support in such areas as technical direction, issuing contracting warrants, training the contracting force, etc. In the discussion of this research topic, he informed the researcher that this and the parallel topic of a career path for military contracting officers has been "one of the hottest issues since 1989." That encompasses the training, educating and employing of military contracting officers from the Captain/0-3 rank to Colonel/0-6 rank. "It is a very basic

concept that has never made the light of day.” He feels that it has been unsuccessful to date because the field is so small in its current structure and organization. He also felt that the learning curve is so great because:

Year one of the payback tour is spent training and learning the field. Year two has the officer actually “doing”, like a marksman on the rifle range. Year three he becomes an expert at it and then he leaves the field.

As he refers to the whole situation as a “very politically hot issue”, he says that it is a command’s call on creating/assigning billets. This means that the Contracting Branch at HQMC makes recommendations and is the contracting field sponsor, but ultimately it is the command’s decision to make room on the Table of Organization (T/O) for a qualified contracting officer billet. This refers back to what some of the field contracting officers referred to as rational ignorance: commands or commanders do not fully understand the importance of a contracting officer and what assets and capabilities he brings to the battlefield. He said that “line officers, 0-6/0-7 and above ranks, felt that the contracting tours hurt the officers in their primary MOS fields.” He also offered that with an appropriate change in the organizational design of the contracting community, a Captain/0-3 equivalent who is at or around the ten year mark in time in service upon entering the contracting field could make a career out of contracting if billets were available or a permanent command was structured as such. The officers would do a garrison support contracting tour (MCB/MCAS), then a deployed contracting support tour (or vice versa), a joint tour (with DCMA) and/or then a planning and policy tour (HQMC). That would give the officer at least another ten years of time in service for a total of over twenty years in the Marine Corps. The driving agent of that needs to be a

lateral move into the military contracting field for the remainder of the officer's time in service. [Ref. 58]

Interviews with Mr. Paul Sando who is the head of contracting at the LB Branch of HQMC, Ms. Kathy Rogers who is the contracting officer at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina, and Ms. Alberta Abram who is the contracting officer at MCAS Beaufort, South Carolina, reiterated the remarks made by all of the other interviewees previously mentioned in this study. They felt that there "absolutely should be a military contracting officer billet in [their] office" [Ref. 59]; that "the investment in the schooling is so great that [the Marine Corps] should promote and keep the contracting officers" [Ref. 60]; that the Marine Corps "shouldn't waste the contracting officers it has, [it] needs to retain the knowledge and experience" [Ref. 61]; and that "the killer for the military contracting officer community is the fact that it's a secondary MOS, it needs to be a primary one" [Ref. 59]. One of the civilian contracting officers even said that "we must stop reinventing the wheel each time" and that the turnover "kills [them]". [Ref. 60]

3. United States Army Contracting Officers

The officers in the United States Army Acquisition Corps who specialize in contracting make the move into the field on a permanent basis. When the researcher explained the Marine Corps contracting officer program to an interviewee from the Army Acquisition Corps, that officer thought the approach was "ludicrous". He said that he might have thought twice about applying for the contracting program if the Army made its program just a one-payback tour program like the Marine Corps. He felt that he/the Marine Corps officers would not be as competitive for retention and/or promotion when

compared to the others in their primary military occupational specialty and that they would “undoubtedly loose some of their MOS skill set.” He also stated that by creating a permanent command structure for the military contracting officers and making the transition via a lateral move as a permanent one, that it would “help tremendously in building the professionalism within the community.” [Ref. 37]

4. Marine Corps Legal Officers

The legal officers in the Marine Corps often advise military contracting officers and help to review contracting documents. After discussing with some of the legal officers how the military contracting officer program works in the Marine Corps, one stated that it is “kind of a waste of talent and education.” He went on to also point out that in his experiences and dealings with the military contracting officers that “the people who do it are very good at what they do.” He also stated that legal officers are “very removed from the technical details” of contracting. He also thought that the turnover of contracting officers and the fact that there is no stable or permanent contracting officer force/command continuously hurts the community. He summarized the interview by stating:

Most people think the NPS guys are thrown a cherry to get to go to school. However, they are removed from their primary MOS and taking a chance in losing touch with that field. They work their tails off at school developing a technical skill and they do a good job. They should be kept around. [Ref. 62]

Another interviewee from the legal officer community also spoke highly of his interactions with the military contracting officer community in the Marine Corps. He too thought it was a “shame they get pulled after one payback tour” and that the Marine

Corps “needs to find a way to keep these guys.” He explained to the researcher how the legal officer community was structured and employed to provide general legal support throughout the Marine Corps. He thought that a similar or parallel structure might be a good way to organize a permanent contracting command/force. The legal officers basically start out at a base or garrison duty within the various Force Service Support Groups. Some are then farmed out to small JAG offices at other commands (Divisions/Aircraft Wings). Others are rotated through the MEFs and deploy with the MEUs. Then after those experiences, some are sent to higher echelons, like HQMC, to provide policy and oversight. He thought that a similar structure might help the contracting community to stop “reinventing the wheel each time.” [Ref. 63]

5. DCMA Contracting Officers

After interviewing various officers within the Defense Contract Management Agency, more of the same remarks the researcher heard throughout this study were repeated. When the United States Marine Corps military contracting officer program was reviewed with the Director of Military Personnel for the Defense Contracting Management Agency, he stated:

I might not have taken a contracting assignment. I would be taken out of my field, I would lose touch with it, my networking in it would diminish, and I would be hurt for promotion. There are too many significant negatives with [the USMC] approach. What benefit does the Marine Corps get with removing these guys after three years?

He also felt that “it would be great” to have Marine Corps contracting officers assigned to DCMA and furthermore that “any of [the DCMA] commanders would love to have a Marine Corps military contracting officer work for them.” A Marine Corps officer

at the Defense Contract management Agency would get an “eye opening” experience and be “very busy”. When he was asked why there are no Marine Corps military contracting officers at the Defense Contracting Management Agency, he said that “simply the Marine Corps just doesn’t send them here.” He also stated that:

The jobs at DCMA for contracting officers are vanilla jobs –meaning no special colored suits are required. Any type of service officer could do it provided they are qualified contracting officers. A USMC contracting officer would do a fine job here, I’m sure.

Potential jobs for qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers would be as program integrators, who are the in-plant eyes and ears of the program manager and provide oversight, or as Contract Administrative Officers and/or Quality Assurance representatives. [Ref. 64]

The Defense Contract Management Agency has had a 35% annual increase in its workload since 1998. It is broken up into three major commands: DCMA East, DCMA West and DCMA International. At a contracting seminar with the Commander of DCMA East, he stated that “once General Schwatzkopf and General Powell found out what DCMA could do in the Gulf War, [DCMA] has been in it ever since.” His command alone has cognizance over 2,500 contractors and he is convinced the command will continue to “right size ourselves and re-organize to best support DCMA’s customers.” To structure his command in order to execute its mission, he has over 69 Contract Administrative Offices (CAO) east of the Mississippi River, yet not one Marine Corps military contracting officer. When asked about this and if he would be willing to take Marine Corps military contracting officers into his command, he enthusiastically stated:

I would love to have USMC contracting officers at DCMA! They would be plenty busy and learn a lot. It would be an asset for the command. The

USMC needs more contracting officers and to identify them to DCMA for assignment. They could work on USMC exclusive projects and be extremely beneficial in that environment. They could also do joint projects like the Anthrax vaccine and/or work as program integrators. I would be very willing and pleased to have them join the command. [Ref. 65]

After a different contracting seminar, the researcher had an opportunity to talk with the Chief of Contract Review and Field Assistance for the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). He said that at that particular command they are beginning to build their own acquisition staff/organization. He too acknowledged the fact that at that joint command there are currently no qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers. He did firmly state that they would be willing to employ Marine Corps military contracting officers there and that the command could definitely use them. He also stated that not only would they "very much so" be gainfully employed but that the command would "totally" benefit by having them on staff. His opinion was clear in that the Marine Corps military contracting officers would learn a lot and the command could positively use the help. [Ref. 66]

B. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Studies of the service behavior of Marine Officers attending the Special Education Program (SEP) have shown that officers who participate in it have been leaving active service at a higher rate than non-SEP participating officers. [Ref. 67] The Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Industrial Affairs) echoed this by saying that the biggest challenge today is the people problem: not being able to keep good people in the organizations and that it's a critical vulnerability. [Ref. 68] As the researcher

interviewed officers in the Marine Corps military contracting community, civilian Marines in key contracting positions, United States Army Acquisition Corps officers, Marine Corps legal officers and DCMA officials, each one generally stated the same issues about the Marine Corps military contracting community and its structure:

- The training and education are superb;
- There needs to be a move to make the transition into the contracting force a permanent one and that a lateral move is the most effective way to do it;
- The officers, the Marine Corps, and the Defense Contract Management Agency would all benefit from assigning Marine Corps military contracting officers to DCMA billets;
- There needs to be a permanent contracting command structure/organization in the Marine Corps;
- Retention of qualified military contracting officers is a problem;
- There are significant tradeoffs made regarding maintaining knowledge, expertise and job skill sets by rotating officers out of their primary MOS, into a contracting payback tour and back to their primary MOS; and
- The Marine Corps needs more qualified military contracting officers in its ranks.

As each person was aware of these challenges, actions to rectify these issues are at a standstill and have been stalled out for quite some time. With a 25% increase in Department of Defense (DOD) procurement projected from now until 2005 [Ref. 68], the Marine Corps needs to take swift, bold, and decisive action now to be better prepared for

the missions of the future. If not, it could find itself scrambling for a quick fix that might not be the right or complete answer. The world is changing, different missions are evolving more often and the Marine Corps needs to respond accordingly. What can be seen most prominently from these interviews is that the people in the field are recognizing the need for change. The challenge is finding a viable, long-term solution that can be communicated efficiently and effectively to the policy makers, the decision makers and the commanders to take action on in order to ensure success today and in the future.

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IV. ANALYSIS

This chapter analyzes the data collected and material presented in Chapters II and III. It covers the strengths, weaknesses, similarities, deficiencies, key elements and trends present in the current Marine Corps military contracting officer community.

A. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of this study, the researcher has found that one thing is constant: the contracting mission of the United States Marine Corps is being accomplished. Through identifying and analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, similarities, deficiencies, key elements and trends present in the current Marine Corps contracting officer community, the objective becomes figuring out how the community can adjust to the changing times and missions in such a way to continue to accomplish the mission while working smarter not harder. As the Marine Corps prepares for the cloud of uncertainty to settle over the volatile world, a proactive approach to change will certainly allow for continued superior support from the military contracting community on the diverse battlefields. Such adaptability and insight is needed to prepare the contracting community to better support the operational forces and lead the Marine Corps through the 21st Century.

B. STRENGTHS

The Marine Corps has a valid need to sustain its operations in garrison and on the battlefield through contracting. By realizing this need and participating in the special education program, the Marine Corps sends a handful of officers to the Naval Postgraduate School each year to be formally trained and educated in contracting. This is a true strength of the military contracting officer community as the officers receive top-notch education through the grueling and challenging curriculum set up for them at the school. Each officer walks away with a solid base, or foundation, in contracting to take back with him/her to the Fleet Marine Force. Whereas participation in the special education is one hundred percent voluntary, what can be seen is that the Marine Corps gets people who want to be there. Accordingly, these officers work diligently through the coursework to prepare themselves for their follow-on payback tour in contracting.

Another strength lies in the fact that the officers who attend the Naval Postgraduate School to go through the contracting program are mid-level Captains to junior Majors. Officers of those ranks bring with them a wealth of experience from the operational forces. This gives them a good understanding of what is happening in the trenches at home and overseas to allow them to best support their customers. They understand the criticality of contracting high quality items and services to be delivered to the right place at the right time. They don't allow themselves to get lost in paper trails and they continually present "can do" attitudes.

The pool of officers that are eligible to participate in the special education program and become qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers is not limited

to any special field/military occupational specialty. This is a major strength because the program utilizes officers with very diverse backgrounds/military occupational specialties. It takes on board officers from the combat arms, combat support and combat service support communities equally. The result is a contracting force made up of officers with military occupational specialties from infantry, artillery and logistics to air traffic controllers, supply and aviation. This provides another avenue for the military contracting officers to understand and relate to their customers. The contracting officer understands the needs of the operational forces and can appreciate the urgency of obtaining something to fill that need.

Every Marine Corps military contracting officer interviewed for this study presented a very good attitude towards his/her job. This is often an important strength that goes unmentioned. While working in a technically challenging and detail demanding profession, each officer was very confident in his/her ability to perform accordingly. While not only thoroughly enjoying what they are currently doing in the contracting community, each military contracting officer was very adamant in voicing their desires to stay in the contracting field and even venture into the Defense Contract Management Agency realm if presented the opportunity. Such a feeling of confidence and job satisfaction along with flat out liking what they do are very important factors in a formula for success.

With two thirds of the Marine Corps military contracting officer force being in place at their jobs for almost two years now, the force is a relatively mature one. This presents a strength because there is continuity and experience out there that is surely

aiding these officers in doing their job. With the Naval Postgraduate School being a choke point for contracting officers prior to returning to the Fleet Marine Force to do their payback tour, the officers get to know each other fairly well. The community is relatively small and the officers have the ability to reach out to their peers that they went through school with to seek advice and assistance. This provides a simplistic way to trouble shoot problems and figure out how to be proactive in their professional needs.

Another strength is the readiness of the current military contracting officer community and how it is viewed from outsiders looking in. This can be attributed to the maturity of the force as mentioned above. The second portion about the perception of outsiders looking in refers to such professions as the legal officers of the Marine Corps. There is a portion of business law/contract law that relates the legal officers to the contracting officers. The legal officers interviewed for this study had nothing but high regards and words of praise when talking about their dealings with Marine Corps military contracting officers. They unduly appreciate the hard work, unyielding effort and true professionalism that the contracting officers dedicate to their jobs. All of that effort upfront makes the legal officer's job easier in the long run. This comes in the form of thoroughly drafted contracts, clauses and source selections with such precise detail that sufficiently lowers and manages the risk of successful protests.

The last strength that needs to be mentioned not for the Marine Corps contracting community but for the Department of Defense contracting community as a whole is the United States Army's approach to training, educating and employing its military contracting office community. While the training and education in the beginning is

virtually identical to that of a Marine Corps military contracting officer, the focus here is on the employment of them. The United States Army approach of putting an officer into the contracting community around the rank of mid-level Captain and leaving him/her in that community for the remainder of his/her time in the service is brilliant. The officer has a path for growth and continuously sharpens his/her contracting skill set by moving from one contracting job/billet to another. This ensures continuity in the field, provides for a mature force and allows the officers in the field to shape the community with whatever changes are needed to best support the war fighters. They are continuously improving themselves, their procedures and their policies to provide first-rate support at home while in garrison and on the ensuing battlefields. The lack of continual turnover allows these officers to build the contracting community's morale and take pride in what they do. They learn from their experiences, successes or mistakes, and refine themselves over and over again to be the best they can be. The individual contracting officer benefits from the permanent assignment as a contracting officer, the contracting community benefits from the continued professionalism and innovative changes, and the Army benefits by having a highly trained and proficient contracting core.

C. WEAKNESSES

Though no weaknesses were found to be catastrophic to the military contracting officer community in its ability to complete the mission, there are a couple worth mentioning. One such weakness is the acute loss of knowledge/expertise in the officer's job field. This works two ways: when leaving his/her primary military occupational

specialty to go into contracting; and when leaving the contracting field to go back to his/her primary military occupational specialty.

The five-year stint that an officer does in the contracting community virtually removes that officer from his/her primary military occupational specialty. During this time, he/she loses touch with that military occupational specialty community and his/her skill set declines. With the technology surge at such a continuous high rate today, the way things are done constantly changes. This technology directly affects many primary military occupational specialties. More and more activities are being automated and if the officer is not in the field evolving with these changes, he/she will find that they are out of touch with the community. When the officer returns to his/her primary military occupational specialty after a five-year hiatus in contracting, he/she will generally be a senior Major or junior Lieutenant Colonel. At such a rank the officer would return to the Fleet Marine Force to fill a billet like Operations Officer, Executive Officer or even as a Commanding Officer of a Battalion or Squadron. To fill one of these billets, the officer must be one of the sharpest officers in the unit regarding his/her military occupational specialty skills. The problem is that they have not been around within the community for the last five years and cannot possibly be accustomed to the changes in policy, practices and procedures. This puts that senior officer at a terrible disadvantage and possibly sets him/her up for failure. Theoretically, an infantry officer could come back from a payback tour in contracting to be an infantry battalion commander. He has to ask himself if he is qualified to lead Marines into the front line battle after being away from the community for so long. In the case of an officer who is an air traffic controller, is he really qualified

to lead a unit in controlling aircrafts after being away from the technology transfusion that's taken over the electronics equipment over the last five years? The response from the majority of the officers in the contracting community now who will be facing this challenge shortly felt that they would not be adequately prepared to do so after their payback tour. The researcher agrees with this after reviewing the data collected.

The other end of the spectrum deals with the fact that the officer spends five years developing the skill set needed to be an effective and efficient contracting officer and then returns to his/her primary military occupational specialty for a tour. That tour in his/her primary military occupational specialty could be three to four years. While stepping away from the contracting community for that long, there is no doubt the edge and expertise needed to be a proficient contracting officer is lost. Acquisition reform has been going on for years and continues to change the way business is done in the Department of Defense procurement world. The current way these officers are utilized presents a serious weakness in the program. Questions need to be asked about what the long-term benefit is of taking the time and spending the money to train and employ these officers as contracting officers for that five-year period to virtually never utilize that skill set again. To come back to the contracting community as a senior officer after another tour in his/her primary military occupational specialty will require more time, training and schooling which all amounts to more money. That time and that money is never readily available and it presents an unnecessary challenge in bringing that officer back up to par to be able to perform the functions of a contracting officer. Had that officer remained in contracting since the onset, this would not be an issue.

Another weakness in the current design of the Marine Corps military contracting officer program is the turnover of billets. Although the maturity of the current military contracting officer force was identified as a strength earlier in this study, in a few months inexperienced contracting officers right out of school will replace one third of that force. As this cycle continues every few years in the program, it presents a spike in the learning curve. The research has shown that the new contracting officer spends the entire first year in his/her billet learning how to apply the theories learned in school to the real world applications. With the majority of the experienced contracting officers getting out of the Marine Corps and the others returning to their primary military occupational specialty at other locations in the Fleet Marine Force, the new contracting officers are left without mentors to help them along the way in understanding and performing their jobs. The valuable time being dedicated to teaching themselves their jobs could be used to improve the systems, the policies and the procedures while fostering creative innovations from the more experienced officers. This is not possible because those experienced contracting officers completely leave the community and move on to other non-contracting duties.

The lack of billets available for Marine Corps military contracting officers is a huge weakness for the program. It creates an environment that completely stymies any possible growth potential in contracting. The officers fill a role much like a middle reliever on a baseball team who comes in to pitch to one batter, gets that batter out and hands the ball back over to the manager. The contracting officer comes in for a few years, performs the functions of a contracting officer and then leaves the community and returns to his primary military occupational specialty. Neither scenario above allows the

individual to grow, learn from his/her experiences, mentor new people in the field, positively effect the policies at a higher level and refine the procedures using his/her keen insight from being around the community for an extended period of time. To compound the weakness of not having more billets available for Marine Corps military contracting officers is the fact that at some Marine Corps bases and air stations, there are Navy officers filling that role. Though they are adequate in getting the job done, there is no reason the Marine Corps couldn't put a Marine Corps military contracting officer in any of those billets. The same holds true for units that have limited purchasing thresholds/constraints and have civilian or senior enlisted Marines filling those roles. Those would be outstanding entry-level positions for the inexperienced contracting officers coming right out of school. With no billets available at joint commands such as the Defense Contract Management Agency, there is also a lack of opportunity for the Marine Corps military officers to engage in contracting actions on a larger scale and for more diverse items. In any case, all of this limits the amount of exposure the Marine Corps military contacting community gets. That is critical, as the commanders need to be advised on the vital role that contracting shops perform to support them at home and on the battlefield. The weakness is clear: without a good growth pattern in the community, the contracting field is hurt by the lack of leadership, advising, mentoring and proper decision-making.

D. SIMILARITIES

One similarity that was discovered in conducting this research was that at some of the current billets the reporting chain and general operating procedures were the same. This refers to a specific billet on the East coast (i.e. 2nd FSSG contingency contracting officer) with an identical billet on the West coast (i.e. 1st FSSG contingency contracting officer) where both work for their respective Supply Management Unit (SMU) Officers-In-Charge (OIC) and approach their tasks in similar manners. That is not the case with all of the billets that have mirrored billets on opposite coasts. This similarity allows the two officers to share information and knowledge gained through their experiences to assist the other in providing superior contracting support. It makes the task of ensuring there is no excessive overlapping of responsibility/roles and no areas of responsibility overlooked/omitted. By reporting to the same billet in their respective chains of command, each can advise the other on what the best approach is gain support and carry on the mission.

The other similarity that stood out in this study was the perception that the current Marine Corps military contracting officers had about their primary military occupational specialty skill set and expertise. Virtually every officer was concerned about losing credibility and experience in his/her primary military occupational specialty. They were also concerned about returning to their respective primary military occupational specialty two steps behind everyone else as their skill sets deteriorate from being out of the field. Add to that the exponential effects the information technology age contributes to the way things are done and the researcher believes that these officers have a valid point.

Undoubtedly, this diminishing confidence in their primary military occupational specialty skill set weighs heavily in their decisions as to either get out of the Marine Corps or go back to that field after completing their payback tour in contracting.

The last similarity that the researcher uncovered while collecting the data was the overall attitude of the military contracting officers regarding their desire to remain in the contracting field. Virtually all of the current military contracting officers the researcher interviewed said they would really like to go from one contracting billet to another for the remainder of their time in the service. Accordingly, they felt that the best way to set up this type of scenario would be via a military occupational specialty lateral move. The researcher feels that this is a superb idea. With a permanent contracting command structure in the Marine Corps and other billets created at commands like the United States Special Operations Command and the Defense Contract Management Agency, the officers would be presented many more opportunities to continue to their employment in contracting. There would be a career path, room for growth, a solid base of trained and experienced contracting officers, a well developed core of knowledge and expertise, and a wealth of a pool of qualified people to draw on to improve the community. With this move to contracting being a voluntary one, the senior leadership would find people who truly want to be there applying to it. The result would be greater job satisfaction that would in turn trigger more productivity and increased levels of performance. There would be a personal commitment by the members of the contracting community to improve how the work is done and the policies that govern them to streamline the process and provide

continually better customer service. It would be a win-win situation for the officer, the Marine Corps and more importantly the customers.

E. DEFICIENCIES

The biggest and possibly most detrimental deficiency noted in this study was the lack of a clear champion to lead the military contracting officer community into the 21st century. There is no senior Marine Corps officer within the contracting ranks that wears the uniform, talks the community jargon, and can voice to the senior leadership in the Marine Corps what the best course of action is to foster success in such a technical field. This person would have working knowledge of what is going on in the field contracting billets, how to best support the war fighters, how to refine the policies and procedures, and how to structure the community to promote retention and provide superior support. Without such a champion, the contracting community has only the few Captains and Majors out there in the field getting by with what they have and their peers who have as little experience as themselves filling the roles of policy and decision makers at Headquarters Marine Corps. It is up to those Captains or Majors filling the handful of billets at Headquarters Marine Corps to foster the support needed from officers of much senior rank to make the changes and effect how things are done in the contracting trenches. The challenge is that they, as junior officers, have to sell what contracting can do to support the war fighters as a marketing approach to Colonels and Generals who have virtually no experience in the contracting field. For those Colonels and Generals are

the ones who can invoke the changes needed to better structure the contracting community.

Another deficiency in the current design of the Marine Corps military contracting officer program is the fact that the payback tour is structured as three years performing the contracting functions and then they move out of the field. This turnover creates a vicious cycle time after time that does not promote the transfusion of the experience gained. The program sees officers asking the same questions, making the same mistakes and then turning the reigns over to a new and inexperienced contracting officer to reset the cycle. With a permanent contracting core, the officers would remain in the community while filling various other contracting billets and mentoring the new officers towards success from the start. It would create a great bank of knowledge, which any of the officers could turn to for help in executing their duties and troubleshooting problems. The end result would be a better trained and better prepared core of military contracting officers ready to execute any mission at any time. This would steadily increase the readiness of not only the contracting community but also the Marine Corps as a whole. This is based upon the potential contributions the contracting officers could bring to the battlefield to set the war fighters up to be ready to fight with everything they need.

The inability or unwillingness to recognize contracting as a primary military occupational specialty for officers or make the move a permanent one via a lateral move really inhibits what the officers can do to make a difference. Because the tour is only three years and the first year is being spent learning how to apply the theories learned in school, by the time the officers get into a rhythm with their jobs they find themselves

turning the billets over to a rookie and they themselves prepare to go back to their primary military occupational specialty or terminate their service in the Marine Corps.

The majority of the military contracting officer billets on the West coast have different reporting chains than those on the East coast. There is a sort of disorganized manner of determining whom the contracting officer works for, who writes his/her review and who provides the needed leadership to him/her. Some report directly to the Commanding Generals and some report directly to customers. Reporting to a customer presents the possibility of a conflict of interest in executing his/her duties. That is not a good position to put a young, inexperienced military contracting officer in. With a refined and formally structured new command structure, the military contacting officer would provide services for an operational commander and have his fitness report written by a senior contacting officer. The report would be based on how well the military contracting officer supported that operational commander and that operational commander could provide comments to the senior military contracting officer for purposes of the report. Having the operational commander write the report with input from the senior military contracting officer, the converse of the above, would also work. Either way, how it is structured on one coast should be identical to how it is on the other coast. This is how the rest of the Marine Corps is organized and it appears to work.

The last deficiency that needs to be addressed is that there are no billets for qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers at the Defense Contract Management Agency. All of the other services have billets for military contracting officers at that command. The opportunity to serve in a billet there has been expressed as a favorable

one by the current Marine Corps contracting officers. The experience and knowledge gained would surely benefit the officer, the Defense Contract Management Agency and the Marine Corps. The added billets would give the Marine Corps the ability to broaden their knowledge in the contracting community. Then the Marine Corps could refine its practices and embark on the latest technology and contracting procedures. This would also provide the growth opportunities and career progression needed to retain a solid base of professional military contracting officers in the Marine Corps. It also allows these contracting officers to act as ambassadors of the Marine Corps while serving at the Defense Contract Management Agency. Again it presents a win-win situation for all but currently this avenue for success and growth doesn't exist.

F. KEY ELEMENTS

Because the officers who participate in the Marine Corps military contracting officer program do so voluntarily and the fact that there is a selection board to ensure that they meet academic and performance standards, the result is a force that is made up of high caliber individuals. They are performing a job that they like which not only drives up their performance but also gives these officers a great feeling of job satisfaction. These officers of such high caliber continually present a "can do" attitude and ensure that each task is accomplished thoroughly and in a timely manner. Their ingenuity, innovation and work ethic are at the highest levels and the results are shown in the high ratings regarding readiness and customer satisfaction.

A key element that was identified by the officers the researcher interviewed was the idea of Marine Corps military contracting officers having a combat service support background. Military occupational specialties such as supply, logistics or financial management lend themselves as better backgrounds to have upon embarking on a contracting officer assignment. Though not a “show stopper”, an officer with a combat arms military occupational specialty has to go the extra step in understanding how the world of service support works as a whole, the parallel systems it uses and how the focus on filling customer needs timely and efficiently takes priority. The difference is changing how one thinks: from being a front line executor to a support person who must be proactive in reading the plan, seeing the battlefield and determining what will be needed to conduct the operation and get the items to the right place at the right time in the right quantity to support the right people. Military contracting officers with combat service support military occupational specialties are accustomed to thinking like that and have an early edge on getting that type of mission done more accurately the first couple of times around. Along those same lines, due to the current way the military contracting officer program is structured, when it is time to go back to their primary military occupational specialties the officers returning to the combat service support field can transition back more easily. This is because contracting is a form of combat service support and during their contracting payback tour the officers are an ad-hoc part of that field. The officers with a primary military occupational specialty of combat arms are judged more harshly by their peers and are often looked at as having much less credibility upon returning as well.

Another key element of this program is having people who are customer oriented participate in it. The ability to communicate effectively, understand someone's needs and be innovative in filling those needs is of the utmost importance. The military contracting officer must work alongside the war fighters who are the customers and be responsive to their needs. That officer cannot approach it as an "us versus them" battle or he/she will not be successful. By presenting to the war fighters what contracting can bring to the battlefield, making their jobs easier or more tolerable, and being acutely responsive in filling their needs, the military contracting officer can form a long lasting relationship with his/her customers. By being truly customer oriented, the military contracting officer can bring timely, effective and efficient support to the customer in garrison or on the battlefield. This attention marks superior customer service which will bring those customers back every time and keep the military contracting officer fully engaged in meaningful tasks to lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century with state of the art supplies, services and equipment.

The most predominant key element uncovered in this study was the fact that organizations outside of the Marine Corps have both a need and a desire to employ qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers. Throughout various agencies external to the Marine Corps like the Defense Contract Management Agency and United States Special Operations Command, each was very adamant in saying they would truly welcome Marine Corps military contracting officers in their unit, that those officers would be gainfully employed and that both the commands and the individuals would benefit from such exposure. The Marine Corps would benefit too. The Defense Contract

Management Agency has contracting officers from every service except the Marine Corps working for them. The Defense Contract Management Agency works on hundreds of thousands of contracts annually for programs that are both multi-service and service specific. If the Marine Corps made a commitment to dedicate military contracting officers to the Defense Contract Management Agency, the officers could work on Marine Corps specific programs like the new Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) trucks and Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAAV) or joint programs like the anthrax vaccine and Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). Exposure to these programs for Marine Corps military contracting officers, which are currently being administrated by other services' officers, would give the programs a Marine Corps perspective that would undoubtedly benefit the program. This added dimension through representation would also benefit the Marine Corps too. The officer would also benefit by getting the experience of working on such major contracts and doing so in a joint service environment. The Defense Contract Management Agency would benefit as well by having more resources to undertake its mission and have ambassadors from each service available to offer insight on specific scenarios. The same holds true for commands like the United States Special Operations Command, Naval Air Systems Command, Naval Facilities Command, etc. These units all want to obtain the services of qualified Marine Corps military contracting officers but the roadblock to providing this support is the Marine Corps' decision to not dedicate the personnel resources to these units. Participating in these programs would be a great second tour in contracting for Marine Corps military contracting officers. By making some simple organizational design

changes to the current system, the Marine Corps could easily identify individuals to fill these such billets which in turn would strengthen the Marine Corps contracting community by giving it stability and recycling the experience of these qualified officers. The officers would continue to experience the job satisfaction they have now and would not be so inclined to get out of the Marine Corps by having an opportunity to continue to do contracting as a primary military occupational specialty for the remainder of their time in service. Participating in the contracting missions of the above mentioned commands would create this exact type of option and continue to utilize the skill sets the officers develop in contracting as opposed to shelving that knowledge and experience and returning them to their primary military occupational specialties after just one three-year payback tour in contracting.

G. TRENDS

The most alarming trend uncovered in this study is the fact that many of the military contracting officers are getting out of the Marine Corps after their payback tours. This is occurring at a relatively high rate as shown in the data collected. These officers are of a high caliber and provide outstanding support to the Marine Corps' mission. The additional time, money and effort spent on training these officers in becoming qualified military contracting officers is a significant amount. It would be in the best interest of the Marine Corps to do what it takes to retain these officers for continued service. The officers interviewed for this study stated that the satisfaction they had for their jobs was high and if they could remain in the contracting field they would stay in the Marine

Corps. The deterrent or primary reason they stated for getting out of the Marine Corps after their payback tour was that they were not going to be afforded the opportunity to stay in contracting and do another tour in that field.

In order to participate in the special education program and the contracting discipline, the officers have to have a superior performance record. Assuming these officers approach their contracting duties/tour with the same level of effort and achieve the same record of performance, their decisions to get out of the Marine Corps after their payback tours leave a large void. This void of high performing, exceptionally experienced and extensively educated officers takes years to fill. The average rank of the officers when they get out after their payback tour is Major/0-4. It takes roughly ten years to grow an officer to that rank. In addition to the loss of an officer of that rank and quality, the Marine Corps is also losing the experienced leadership that accompanies such an officer. That leadership is an integral part in mentoring and developing the younger officers as well as the associated troops and noncommissioned officers. In the researchers opinion, allowing these officers to get away seriously degrades the Marine Corps' capabilities. The officer makes a commitment to provide superior service to the Marine Corps in the contracting field. The Marine Corps makes a commitment to ensure the officers receive first-rate education and experience in the contracting field. To allow those officers to walk away after their payback tour because of the fact that they are not afforded the opportunity to continue to work in the contracting field is a shame. The Marine Corps needs to take the extra step in changing its organizational design to create a permanent contracting command in order to provide this opportunity for its experienced

leadership in the contracting field. The end result would be less of a retention problem, an increase in individual job satisfaction and a solid core to draw from to provide contracting support in garrison and on the battlefields to lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century.

H. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The acquisition and contracting world of the Department of Defense is no stranger to change. Since as far back as the Revolutionary War period the Department of Defense has continued to try to improve the ways in which it conducts its procurement business. The pace of change has intensified as of late due to the rapid advances in technology. At the macro level, the Department of Defense and the individual military services are trying to keep pace with their series of reform initiatives. Unfortunately, in the Marine Corps the focus has been on the policies and procedures associated with the acquisition reform initiatives. What is being overlooked is how to adjust the structure of its military contracting officer personnel to adapt to the changing environment. As the contracting mission evolves, the military contracting officers continue to find themselves managing the business relationships and processes of the Marine Corps not just contracts. These are invaluable functions that must be addressed by experienced people to lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century. Whereas civilian and enlisted Marines amplify how well the contracting mission is executed, the need for a permanent and stable military contracting officer force is paramount. Appointing civilian Marines as the head contracting officers instead of military contracting officers at so many of the Marine

Corps installations and units provides less flexibility. This flexibility being alluded to is in work schedules, deploying on ships and over seas, serving on the front lines of the battlefields and fighting in conflicts. With a military contracting officer filling these roles at the various installations and units, that Marine officer can carry out the contracting mission, doesn't need to get paid overtime to work long, arduous hours seven days a week, will deploy at a moment's notice on ship or over seas, and will pick up a rifle to join the battle and fight. These capabilities are not lost by creating a permanent contracting command that is staffed with military contracting officers. It is a "two for one" deal as every Marine is a rifleman; these ones are just advanced in conducting contracting actions as well. The civilian and enlisted Marines will still be there to support as well, but now there is much more flexibility in accomplishing the various assigned missions. The Marine Corps also benefits by retaining that experienced and somewhat senior leadership to help steer the Marine Corps along the way.

The strengths, weaknesses, similarities, deficiencies, key elements and trends of the current organizational design for the military contracting officer program are many. This chapter highlighted some of the more important ones. With a few simple changes, the Marine Corps can secure a stable base of qualified and experienced military contracting officers to draw from to support its mission. Change requires effort and an ability to see where the particular service wants to be in the future. The Marine Corps needs to understand that future position or vision and begin to restructure its contracting organization now so it will be prepared for the future challenges. The right amount of

effort up front will not only leave the Marine Corps better prepared for what the future holds but it will also produce less unintended consequences from a lack of adaptability.

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V. MODEL FOR A PERMANENT CONTRACTING COMMAND STRUCTURE

There are many ways to run an organization successfully. As mentioned earlier in this study, the contracting mission of the Marine Corps is being accomplished. A lot of time, effort and money are being used to produce that desired end state. In the context of the current design of the Marine Corps military contracting officer program, there are unintended outcomes prevailing that detract from the success of the program. The perceived loss of occupational specialty skill sets, the lack of growth and adequate stability in the contracting force, and the retention of the highly educated and technically skilled officers stand as the three most predominate ones. In an effort to combat these unintended outcomes, the researcher will introduce a model of a permanent contracting command structure for the Marine Corps in this chapter.

A. NARRATIVE OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the rationale behind the model of a permanent contracting command structure for the Marine Corps that will be introduced later in this chapter, the researcher believes it is appropriate to discuss how an organizational systems framework applies to the contracting community.

In a general sense, an organization has inputs that directly contribute to throughputs that in turn produce results. A visual representation of this relationship can be seen in Figure 5.1 below:

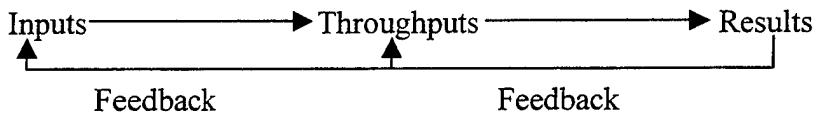


Figure 5.1 Organizational Systems Framework From Ref. [69]

The three general categories of inputs, throughputs and results can be broken down even further. Inputs come in the forms of an environment, key success factors and systems direction. Throughputs take the forms of tasks/jobs, technology, structure, people and processes/subsystems. As the organizational design moves towards results, those results appear as cultures, outputs and outcomes. Accordingly, feedback from the results to the throughputs and/or inputs identifies strengths and/or weaknesses and allows the system to be modified to adjust properly and correct any weaknesses or deficiencies. Generally speaking, the majority of the time the feedback will trigger changes to be made in the design factors of the throughputs to reduce the outcomes and increase the outputs. The outputs are the products or services the system was attempting to provide/produce, while outcomes are generally unintended consequences or implications that arrive as a result of the system. A visual representation of this relationship can be seen in more detail in Figure 5.2 below:

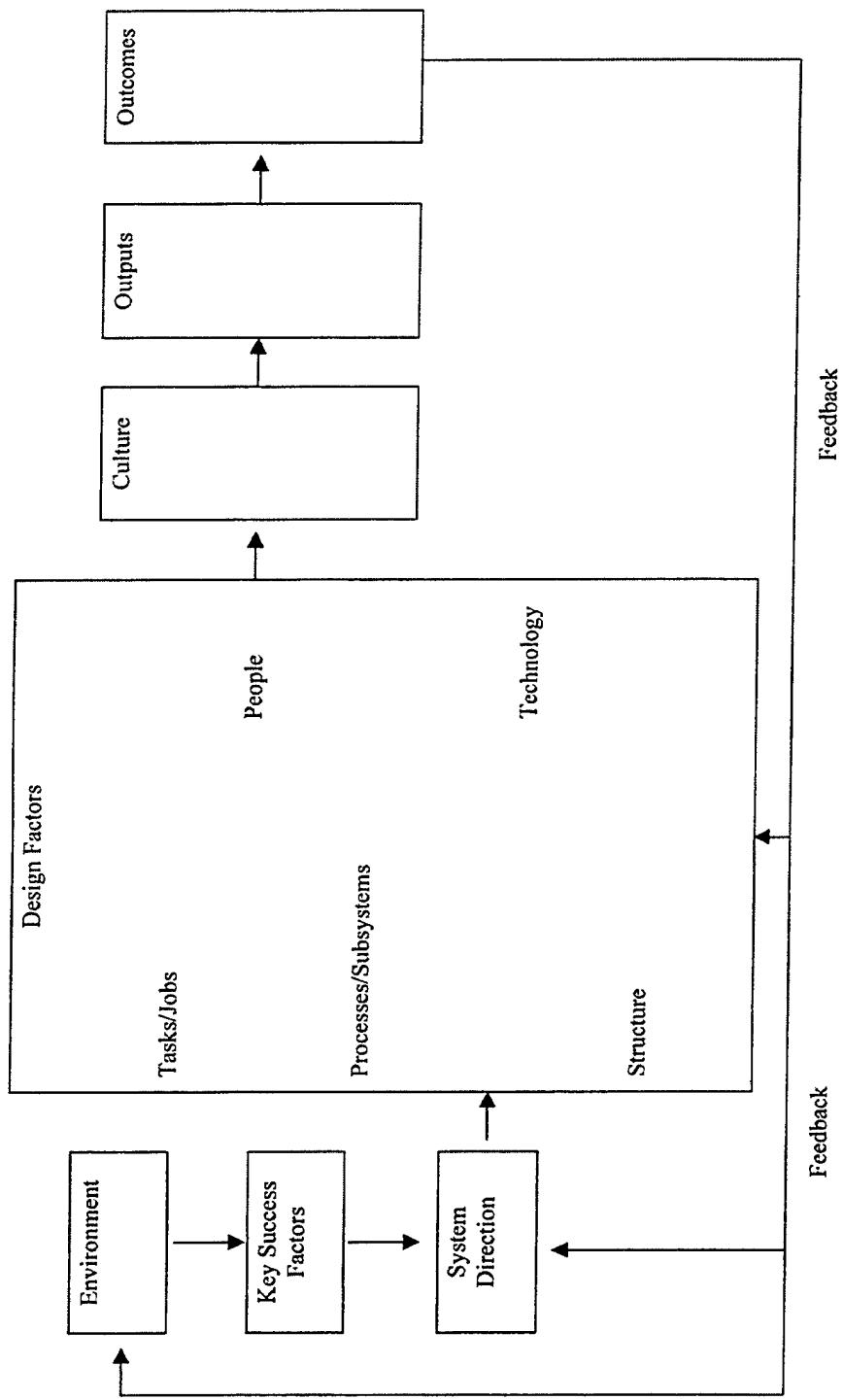


Figure 5.2 Detail Relationship of Organizational Systems Framework From Ref. [69]

When discussing the inputs, as mentioned earlier, the organizational systems framework refers to the environment, key success factors and system direction as seen above. The environment is external to the system and addresses political, economical, social and technological issues. These come in forms of rules, regulations, competition, laws, etc. The key success factors identify what it takes for the system to be successful. The system direction covers mandates, values, missions, strategic issues, visions, goals and strategies. All of this can be seen in the Marine Corps military contracting officer program's design in the form of the Federal Acquisition Regulations, Department of Defense procurement policies, Marine Corps contracting mission, socioeconomic goals, competition requirements, and strategic mission according to the National Military Strategy.

The five design factors mentioned earlier and shown above, are the points where change can be introduced to adjust the organizational systems framework in order to achieve the desired outputs. The tasks/jobs area identifies: what the basic tasks are; how they are formalized; what specification is required; how it is varied; and what differentiation is required. For the military contracting officer program in the Marine Corps, this means outlining the need for officers who are specifically qualified and educated in contracting, what their job descriptions are and what the job requirements are to carry out the assigned missions. Under the technology area of the design factors are issues such as: describing the work flow; identifying the activities in the work flow; identifying the key interdependencies among units or activities in the work flow; and identifying the physical condition of the facilities and equipment. Under the current

design of the military contracting officer organization in the Marine Corps this would cover standard operating procedures in garrison or while on a contingency contracting assignment, doing the job manually with all of the required forms, turning to a paperless contracting plan with the use of current automation, pooled interdependencies with assistance from the legal officers, etc. The processes/subsystems area of the design factors highlights four main areas in it. These areas are: financial management, measurement and controls; communication/information planning and decision making; acquisition and contracting; and human resource management. Financial management, measurement and controls identifies: how people are held accountable for resources; what the budgeting, control, performance measurement and appraisal processes are; and if these mechanisms of accountability produce the desired patterns of behavior. In the contracting design today, this is covered by issuing warrants that give the officers the authority to enter into contracts up to the specified amount on their warrants and through coordination with programmers and controllers to ensure the funds are authorized, appropriated and allocated correctly. The communication/information planning and decision making maps out: how the organization communicates; how it gathers, processes, distributes and evaluates information; how it plans; and how it makes decisions. This can be seen in the military contracting officer community by the ways in which it communicates with its customers to gain a sense of their needs, how the officers solicit suppliers, how they work with their staffs to administer their contracts continually and maximize the use of electronic communications. The acquisition and contracting portion of the processes/subsystems area specifically addresses how the acquisition

process is managed. The relation to the design of the military contracting officer organization today is that the contracting officer has to be, and generally is, in the planning cycle from the start. Otherwise the program might run into unforeseen challenges as the military contracting officer is often the business relationship manager to the civilian contractors. It also addresses the preparedness to rapidly deploy and perform the contingency contracting mission as it becomes needed. Regarding the human resource management area under the processes/subsystems design factor, it addresses: how people are recruited, selected, retained, rotated, promoted, terminated and retired; if the organization has the right kind of people it needs; how to train and develop the people and if the current efforts are adequate; and what the rewards, compensation and awards are for performance. All of these issues are extremely relevant to the way the current design of the military contracting officer organization is and will be addressed in more detail later on in this chapter. The people area of the design factors identifies who the people are in the organization and what their motives, expectations and mindsets are. It also touches on what their knowledge, skills and abilities are. Under the current design, the military contracting organization clearly identifies the individual officers who are selected to become qualified contracting officers. Each officer's prior performance in the Fleet Marine Force is outstanding hence their selection to the program. They are all presented the material to begin creating their "contracting tool box" with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be a contracting officer through the schooling and training. The last area of the design factors, structure, describes: how the organization is structured; what the basic groupings of activities and people are; how the activities/tasks

are combined or departmentalized; how the groupings are integrated; and what the organization's hierarchy is. All of the data collected and material presented throughout this study has outlined the current structure as a design factor for the military contracting officer community today. Specifically, it shows a non-routine chain of command, a lack of coordination, weak controls and virtually no pooled interdependence in execution. Along with the human resource issue, the structure design factor will be focused on in more detail later in this chapter.

As the organization gradually moves from throughputs to results, the first stop in the transition is culture. The culture in an organization identifies: the prevalent norms and values in the system as they are expressed in behavior; how conflict is managed; what the informal patterns of interaction are; if there are any sub-cultures; if the culture impedes or facilitates integration of effort; and if the culture fits the larger environment. The culture represented by the current organizational design of the military contracting officer structure is a positive one. The officers show a norm of doing what it takes to get the job done efficiently and effectively while promoting values of honor, integrity and pride in their workmanship. They manage conflicts by addressing concerns upfront with their customers and maintaining competition amongst their suppliers. The informal patterns of interaction and sub-cultures that arise come in the form of relationships that the officers create at the beginning of their contracting training. While at the Naval Postgraduate School the officers form a sort of bond that allows each one to feel comfortable in calling on their peers later in their payback tour for advice and recommendations. Without a doubt, the culture created fits the larger environment

whereas the military contracting officers and their offices work diligently in supporting the war fighters. They understand the importance of their positions and ensure that any mission is accomplished regardless of what roadblocks or challenges present themselves along the way.

The full transition from throughputs to results finds the organizational systems framework ending up with outputs and outcomes. The outputs are what the system offers or produces in terms of goods/services. It also addresses how outputs are measured and what the indicators of performance are. In the military contracting officer organization, clearly the system offers outputs in terms of the goods and services that are contracted for. Both the number of contract actions and the dollar values of the contracts administered measure these outputs. The indicators of performance are shown in the fact that the war fighters are getting the goods, services and equipment they need in a timely manner. If they were not, then a change would need to be initiated somewhere within the design factors to revamp the contracting process. Currently, customer satisfaction and readiness are both relatively high so the deduction to be made is that performance is being adequately executed and indicated. The last result is in the form of outcomes. These are unforeseen or unintended consequences. Outcomes identify what the implications/consequences of the outputs for the stakeholders are and how the outputs are viewed in terms of the environment. Outcomes are what invoke the need to introduce change somewhere within the organizational system design. The outcomes that prevail in the current design of the Marine Corps military contracting officer organization are: low retention/contracting officers getting out of the Marine Corps; a perceived loss of

credibility and expertise in occupational specialties; and no ability for growth and follow on tours in the contracting field. The feedback of these outcomes now returns to the design factors to initiate change.

The researcher believes that the two areas that should be targeted for the changes needed to reduce these outcomes, or that would eliminate them entirely, are in the structure and human resource management areas. It is these two design factors that will impact the results portion of the organizational systems framework most significantly for the military contracting officer program. In regards to the human resource management area of the design factors, there is already a good beginning in place. The current way of recruiting, selecting and training the individual officers is superb. The continued development, growth and retention of the military contracting officers is what comes up short in allowing this design factor to have as much of a positive impact as it could. Because the life span of a military contracting officer is really just one three-year payback tour and there is currently such a small amount of billets available, the officers don't get the opportunities to continually develop their skills and grow professionally in the field. As such, retention becomes a problem because the officers want to continue doing contracting but opt to get out of the Marine Corps instead. The type of change needed in this design factor must focus its efforts on development, growth and retention. The design factor that addresses the structure of the organization does not optimize the current assets and resources. The non-routine chain of command, lack of coordination and absence of any truly pooled interdependence within the contracting community become the targets for change in this area. By crafting a change that makes the community better

organized, allows the move to contracting to become a new primary military occupational specialty and adequately staffing billets at contracting agencies external to the Marine Corps will allow the program to optimize its resources and increase its outputs for a more complete desired end state. The next section of this study seeks to restructure the current organization in order to strengthen the program and correct these deficiencies. The researcher does this by introducing a model for a new contracting command structure that is a permanent part of the Marine Corps.

B. THE PROPOSED MODEL

To promote the continued development, growth and retention of the military contracting officers, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Marine Corps contracting community, and provide flexibility in supporting the war fighters and lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century, the researcher offers the model in Figure 5.3 below as a design for a permanent contracting command structure that falls under the Logistics Division of the Marine Corps and Figure 5.4 breaks down a unique portion of it even further:

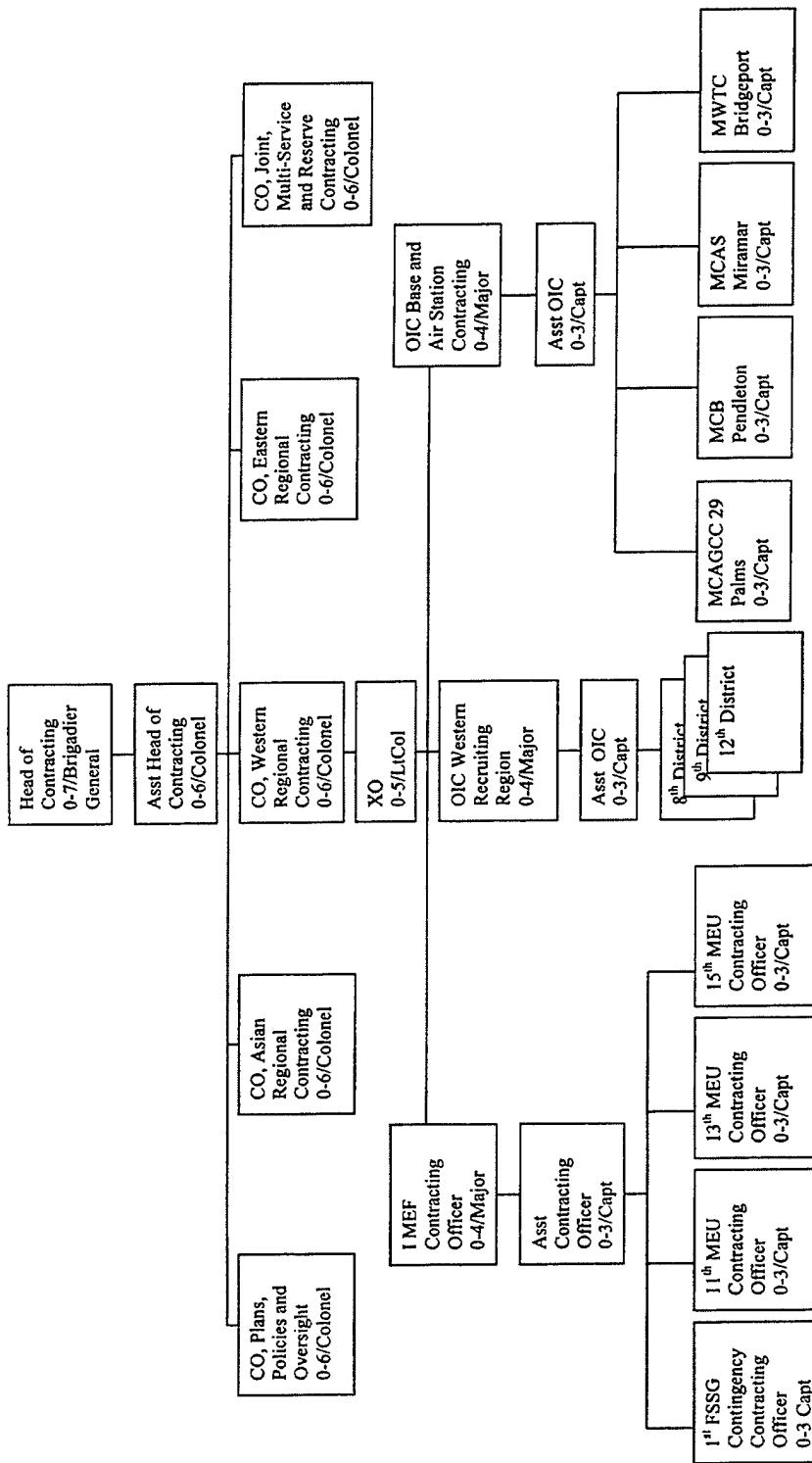


Figure 5.3 Model of a New Permanent Contracting Command Structure for the USMC [Source: Developed by Researcher]

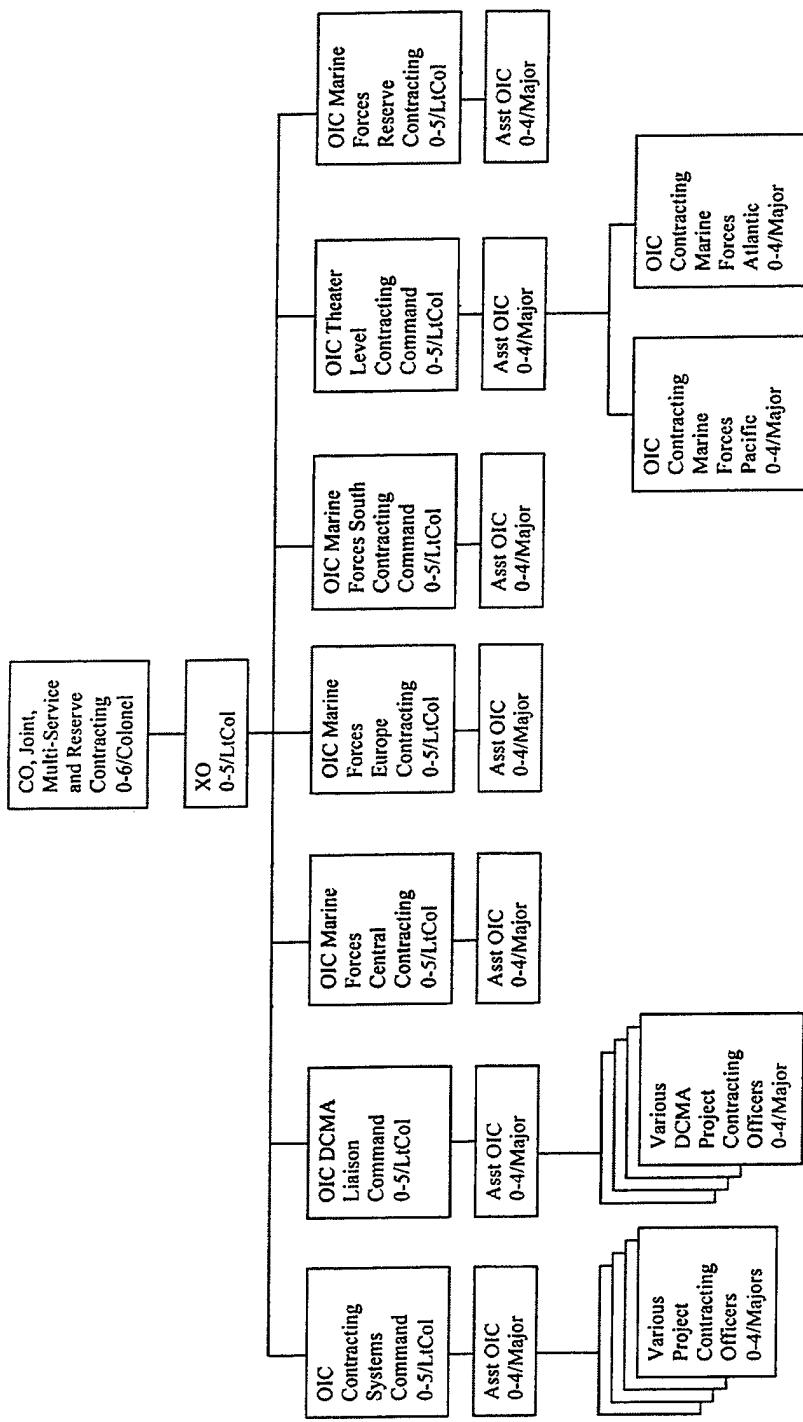


Figure 5.4 Breakout of the Joint, Multi-Service and Reserve Contracting Portion of the Model [Source: Developed by Researcher]

This model maps out how a new permanent contracting command structure could be constructed and integrated into the Marine Corps. Implementing this would in effect be the type of change needed for the design factors of the basic organizational systems framework model to positively impact the military contracting officer community in the Marine Corps. It would be the perfect anti-venom to combat the outcomes that the current systems design produces. While only the Western Regional Contracting Command was expanded in Figure 5.3, similar structures apply for the other identical commands. For example, the Eastern Regional Contracting Command and Asian Regional Contracting Command would have subordinate commands like II MEF and III MEF, respectively. The Contracting Plans, Policies and Oversight Command would have a smaller portion of sub-elements whereas it would focus on exactly what the title reflects: plans, policies and oversight for the entire Marine Corps Contracting community. They would focus on rewriting/reviewing orders, regulations, new contract initiatives, etc. This proposed model creates a multitude of more military contracting officer billets and employs a lateral move process as the vehicle to begin staffing the outlying billets. This model also provides opportunities for the continued development and growth of the military contracting officers that should in turn boost retention. Now the officers have a career path and an opportunity to continue to use their contracting skill sets by rotating throughout the different military contracting officer billets.

The model works by taking the inexperienced contracting officers who come right out of the Naval Postgraduate School and employ them in the lower tier contracting billets. That would give them some experience in the field of contracting and allow them

to learn the differences between the theories learned in school and applications in the Fleet Marine Force. These billets would be contracting officers at the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU), the Marine Corps Bases and Air Stations, and Force Service Support Group contingency contracting offices, etc. After spending a tour performing the functions of contracting in units like the above mentioned commands the officers would be rotated to a second contracting tour. This proposed second tour would be in a billet that requires some prior experience in contracting. Those billets would be as contracting officers with the Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF), as Executive Officers (XO) or Assistant Officers-in-Charge (OIC) at a major contracting command, as a contracting policy officer, or as a Defense Contract Management Agency (or other joint/multi-service unit) contracting officer. After that second tour in contracting, the officers' third tour in contracting would be as a Commanding Officer of a major contracting command, as an Executive Officer of a regional contracting command, as the head of contracting for the systems contracting command, or as a theatre contracting commander. As the officer progresses through each of these tours, he/she would be gaining valuable experience and insight of the Marine Corps contracting world and become not only a leader but also a mentor, teacher and advisor for junior officers in contracting. It builds stability for the contracting community and allows the people who have "been there, done that" in Marine Corps contracting to work on, dictate and update the policies and procedures that govern the community. It also allows the officers to remain in contracting for upwards of ten years to round out their time in service with the Marine Corps. Such opportunities would encourage more officers to stay in the service and erase any problems with retention.

Obviously as the officers work up the pyramid in terms of years in service and rank, there become fewer and fewer billets available. After the twenty-year mark in time in service there are only a few Colonel/0-6 billets in this model and only one that is for a Brigadier General/0-7. If implemented, this model would need to be continually refined and through experience in the community other options for more such senior officer billets might present themselves.

To make this model work, the military occupational specialty of contracting would have to become a primary one for officers. This follows in suit with the way the United States Army does it. What the Marine Corps could do is basically make the transition to contracting be a lateral move that is initiated when the officer applies and is accepted to go to the Naval Postgraduate School. The schooling presents the background and education needed to train the officers to become contracting officers much like any of the other formal military occupational specialty schools do in the Marine Corps. Lastly, the model does not depict how the civilian and enlisted Marines fit in the scheme of this new permanent contracting command structure. They are a very important component and cannot be overlooked. As mentioned in the beginning of this study, that would be a complete study entirely on its own. The assumption is that the necessary complement of civilian and enlisted Marines would be present at each of the commands shown in the model. They would fill billets like deputies, chiefs, specialists, clerks, etc.

A solid team of contracting officers for the Marine Corps as promoted in this model would benefit the Marine Corps as a whole and the officers individually. The Marine Corps would retain the services of these highly trained professionals while the

officers would continue to grow and serve in a challenging area that they enjoy. Other agencies/commands like the Defense Contract Management Agency would also benefit by receiving additional resources in the form of dedicated contracting officers to continue their missions. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

C. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter started out by identifying an organizational systems framework basic model. It then went into more detail of how it is broken down even further and went into what each element represents. From there it applied the current Marine Corps military contracting officer community's design structure to that model and identified the outputs and outcomes. Through addressing the outputs (unintended consequences) and implementing changes back into the design factors, a new model was introduced. The new model designed a permanent contracting command structure for the Marine Corps. Implementing this model would decrease or almost entirely eliminate the undesirable outcomes and allow the contracting community to help lead the Marine Corps through the 21st century. Change is inevitable and planning for it early is a key success factor. This change, in the form of the newly proposed model, is relatively simple and can pay big dividends in the end.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

This study has covered the history of change in the Department of Defense contracting world, how the Marine Corps military contracting officer program works, what the officers currently in the contracting community feel are important issues from an insiders standpoint, and proposed a model for a permanent contracting command in the Marine Corps. The researcher has shown that the success of the Marine Corps military contracting officer program can be attributed to the formula of skills plus desire equals product. The officers are calling for a change and as the stakeholders they will tend to buy into any proposed changes when they are a part of the decision and party to the process. Top-level support is an essential element for such a design change. This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations for the study that was conducted. It also answers the research questions that were introduced in chapter I, recommends areas for future research, and summarizes the need for change.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The data collected and material presented throughout this study have enabled the researcher to reach the following conclusions:

1. There is a retention problem in the Marine Corps military contracting officer community. The officers are highly educated, technically skilled and enjoy

what they are doing as military contracting officers. As it draws closer to the end of their obligated service time, or payback tour, many of the current military contracting officers have said that they will get out of the Marine Corps vice go back to their primary military occupational specialty. Though many did state that if they could stay in the contracting field for the remainder of their time in service that they would stay in the Marine Corps. A lot of time, money and effort go into training and educating these officers. The Marine Corps needs to make the necessary changes in its structure and policy that will make it more attractive to the officers in order to retain them. Many companies have realized the value of retaining the right personnel and achieving workforce stability. Some even say that resignations cost an estimated 25%-200% above that person's annual salary and others say it is even as high as seven times as much. The Marine Corps needs to realize this and take proactive steps to keep its core of contracting experts. By not doing so, almost one third of the duty experts rotate out of the military contracting officer billets annually. One study has shown that many companies reproduce their blunders on a regular basis and waste time and resources resolving problems that have previously been unraveled in the company. It also states that reinventing the wheel is a much more common drain of corporate resources and creativity then most managers imagine. [Ref. 70:P. 150] The key for the Marine Corps is to learn from other companies' mistakes, embrace change and retain its core of contracting experts.

2. There is a perceived loss of occupational specialty skill sets by the military contracting officers. This perception is regarding their primary military occupational specialty skill sets and their secondary (contracting) military occupational specialty skill sets. Most of the officers interviewed for this study stated that they felt they would not be as proficient in their primary military occupational specialty after returning to that field from their five year stint in contracting (two years of school and three years of a payback tour). They were also concerned that it might hurt them in terms of future billet opportunities and promotion possibilities. On the other side of the issue, many felt that after returning to their primary military occupational specialty for three to four years that they would lose their proficiency in contracting. The problem being that they would not be current with acquisition reform initiatives, policies and procedures. The research has shown that each case is highly likely.
3. The current organizational design of the military contracting officer community permits only limited growth and development opportunities for the officers. There are so few billets for military contracting officers in the Marine Corps right now. Additionally, there are also no billets for Marine Corps military contracting officers at joint or multi-service commands like the Defense Contract Management Agency or United States Special Operations Command. The officers do their three year payback tour in contracting and then leave the community. There is little time to learn from their experiences

and make much of a positive impact on the policies and procedures that govern the community. Opportunities for growth and development will provide stability and continuity while aiding retention. Having experienced officers lead the technical community of contracting would benefit it significantly.

4. The proposed model for a permanent contracting command in the Marine Corps will greatly enhance the capabilities of the military contracting officer community. It addresses the outcomes of the current organizational design and makes appropriate changes to reduce those outcomes. The model also shows that the Marine Corps will benefit as will the individual officers. It presents a proactive approach to change that will enable the contracting community to better support the operational forces through the 21st century. The design allows the officers to retain the skills of being a war fighter while also allowing them to be the duty experts in contracting for an extended period of time. This encourages the military contracting officers to tailor the processes involved in contracting and streamline how things are done through the experience they gain in the field.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

From analyzing the data collected and material presented throughout this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Implement the proposed model and create a permanent contracting command in the Marine Corps. Doing so will reduce the outcomes of the current military contracting officer program's organizational design. It will create a path for growth, development and career progression for the military contracting officers in the Marine Corps. The design structure for the new command allows the officers to rotate from one contracting billet to another. This will enable the officers to continually refine their contracting skill sets and also work to boost retention amongst them. The model proves to be a benefit to the individual officers and the Marine Corps as a whole. It builds on the contracting community's core competencies and utilizes individuals with field contracting experience to become policy makers and mentors to the younger and less experienced military contracting officers.
2. Make the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of contracting a primary MOS for officers in the Marine Corps. This is already being done for the enlisted Marines. To accomplish this, the transition to the new MOS of contracting should be a lateral move that is initiated when applying for the special education program. The officers should be assigned the contracting MOS as a primary one after successful completion of schooling at the Naval Postgraduate School. From that point on, roughly as a mid-level Captain in rank, the officers should be rotated amongst contracting billets that will enable them to utilize their special skills and experiences in contracting. The commitment of time and money to send the officers to the Naval Postgraduate

School is a big one. The Marine Corps should look to optimize those efforts by continually employing the officers in the field in which they are trained. This correlates to the way the United States Army trains and employs its contracting officers. It promotes a stable core of well trained contracting officers who are ready to carry out the myriad of contracting assignments in garrison and in battle. By making contracting a primary military occupational specialty at the rank of mid-level Captain, it offers the officers the opportunity to remain in a field that is not only mission essential and technically challenging, but rewarding and enjoyable to them. The deduction to be made here is that if the officers like what they are doing then they will want to remain doing it and do it well. This will promote retention and provide the means for which the Marine Corps can obtain first rate service support from the contracting field.

3. The Marine Corps should aggressively create and staff military contracting officer billets at commands external to the Marine Corps. This means at joint and multi-service commands (such as the Defense Contract Management Agency, the United States Special Operations Command and other like units) that the Marine Corps dedicate personnel resources in the form of qualified military contracting officers to fill contracting officer billets at those commands. This will aid the external commands by not only having additional resources to execute their missions, but also have ambassadors from the Marine Corps present to add a Marine Corps perspective in the hundreds

of programs they have. The Marine Corps will benefit from the exposure as the officers gain invaluable experience from working with the other services and on such a wide array of contracts. From working on large programs like the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) to administering contractor logistics support contracts, the Marine Corps military contracting officers would see things they wouldn't in an all Marine environment and be able to take that knowledge and experience back to the Marine Corps. This would enable the Marine Corps to refine its policies, procedures and practices to ensure it is using the latest technologies and in concert with current acquisition reform initiatives. It is a win-win situation for all.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

This study sought to answer the five secondary questions presented in chapter I in order to find a complete answer to the primary research question of how the Marine Corps could restructure its military contracting officer force to be better prepared to meet today's needs and be more effective in supporting the operational forces. All of the data, analyses, conclusions and recommendations throughout this study have answered those questions. The model presented in chapter V tied it all together by mapping out a new organizational design for the military contracting officer force that, if implemented, would increase its effectiveness and efficiency, promote growth and development, provide stability, and boost retention amongst the contracting officers.

This study has examined where billets exist for Marine Corps military contracting officers and where billets are currently non-existent in the Marine Corps and other commands. It determined that more billets should be created at the systems command, bases, air stations and external agencies that would benefit the units and the individuals. These billets are appropriately depicted in the model in Chapter V.

The current roles and responsibilities of the Marine Corps military contracting officers at each command were presented in Chapters II and III. The study evaluated the billets from a historical point and by discussing the details given by the officers currently filling many of them. It proved the mission was valid, the need is high for more billets and that the current method for training the officers was superb. The employment of them was effective too, but the new structure proposed in the model would increase the effectiveness of the positions.

In assessing how the Marine Corps supports the Defense Contract Management Agency with qualified military contracting officers, it was determined that currently the Marine Corps is the only service that does not provide any contracting officers to fill billets at that command. Through use of the proposed model, this study has shown where/how to implement billets that would benefit both the Defense Contract Management Agency and the Marine Corps.

One of the other secondary research questions sought to find out if the Marine Corps could learn from the Army in its effective and efficient training and employment of its military contracting officers. The Army permanently assigns officers to the contracting profession at around the rank of mid-level Captain. Once a qualified military

contracting officer, the officer stays in the contracting profession for the remainder of his/her time in service. This promotes growth, development and career progression. It also builds a nucleus of experts to shape the community and solidifies its core competencies. The Marine Corps would reap the same benefits by allowing its officers to laterally move into the contracting field and progress as presented in the proposed model.

The last research question inquired about what organizational changes could be made to the Marine Corps to continually provide for well trained contracting officers that are mission effective and what the resulting career field path would be. Chapter V covers this in detail by introducing the basic organizational systems framework as it applies to the Marine Corps military contracting officer community and prompting changes that would enable the force to continue to be proficient. The resulting model also mapped out a career progression that would boost retention and enhance the capabilities of the community.

The proposed model really answers all of the research questions posed in Chapter I. The key to the future success of the program is being open to change. The officers in the field have identified it and seek the senior leaders to act on it. This will ensure superior service support is continued throughout the 21st century.

E. RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Four areas for future research are recommended after concluding this study. They are as follows:

1. Perform a cost/benefit analysis to quantify the implementation of the proposed model. This would provide hard numbers showing what it would cost the Marine Corps to create the billets proposed, while also showing exactly what the benefits would be of such billets above and beyond what was projected in this study.
2. Create a manpower plan to implement the proposed model. To create as many billets as proposed in this study's model, a well developed plan on how to recruit enough officers without draining the other occupational specialties will have to be done. One option might be to phase them in over time.
3. Conduct a future study of customer service after implementation of the model proposed in this study. By comparing customer service before and after the implementation of the proposed model from this study, the Marine Corps could see the additional benefits gained from it that were not addressed in detail in this study. It would also serve as a way to validate the model in order to adjust the proposed billets as necessary.
4. Perform a similar study to the one done here as it applies to the civilian and enlisted Marines in the contracting community. This would ensure that all contracting offices are staffed with the right complement of civilian and enlisted Marines to round out the Marine Corps contracting teams. They could possibly be employed much like the legal teams are today in the Marine Corps.

F. SUMMARY

Change is an everyday part of life. All around the world, change occurs regularly. The department of Defense is acknowledging this change in the different littorals, missions and operations it has been participating in over the last decade. Also changing is the business operations side of the Department of Defense. As it strives to do things better, faster and cheaper, the Department of Defense is making changes in its policies and procedures that govern the acquisition and contracting community. The concept of centralized policy and decentralized execution sees some services being more successful than others at reading the winds of change and moving forward. The Marine Corps military contracting officer community is a relatively young one as it has only been around since 1991. It has not endured much change since the way it was originally organized. This study looked at the current organizational design of the military contracting officer community and developed a model that would promote the change needed to keep the community as an invaluable asset to the Marine Corps. Those military contracting officers are the ones that manage the business relationships for the Marine Corps and bring the support to the battlefield that the war fighters need. The Marine Corps cannot afford to let politics override good business sense. It must be proactive in making the changes necessary for the growth and development that the community needs so that the Marine Corps can retain the highly educated and technically skilled officers it has in the contracting community. As stated throughout this study, the contracting mission of the Marine Corps is being accomplished today. How well it is accomplished in the years to come will depend on how well the program adjusts to its

rapidly changing environment. There are many ways to run an organization successfully. This study has mapped out a viable way to maximize the training, education and potential of Marine Corps military contracting officers in order to be better prepared to support the operational forces through the 21st century.

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